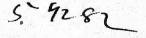
## LIFE AND LETTERS

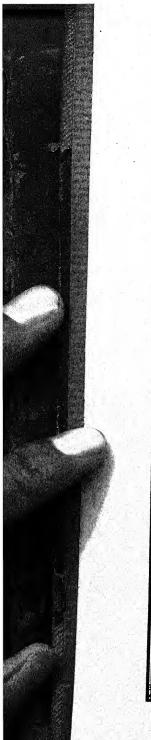
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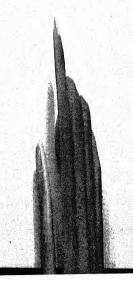
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# LIFE AND LETTERS

F. L. LUCAS

## DOROTHY OSBORNE<sup>1</sup>

We are in the year 1648. General Cromwell is rising steadily to power in England; beyond the Channel, Cardinal Mazarin is already seated on the neck of France; Louis XIV is a neglected little boy of ten; Charles I lies prisoner in the Isle of Wight, in the keep of Carisbrooke; and from an inn in that island a party of young travellers is just setting out-two youths and a girl. At the last moment one of the young men turns round, goes back into the inn, and there writes something with a diamond on the window-pane. It is a sentence from the Bible, from the Book of Esther: 'And Hamman was hang'd upon the Gallows he had prepar'd for Mordecai'. That done, he hurries after his companions. Then someone notices the writing on the window. Its meaning is as transparent as the glass it is written on—'Hamman' is clearly Colonel Robert Hammond, Governor of the Isle of Wight for the Parliament, and gaoler of King Charles. This insolent young devil of a Cavalier has been quoting Scripture very much to his purpose. There is a hue and cry; horsemen go clattering off; the three young people are brought

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> My thanks are due to the B.B.C. for permission to reproduce here parts of this article which were originally broadcasted, and printed in *The Listener*.

back and led before the Governor himself. 'Which of you did this?' Before the real culprit can answer, the girl, his sister, has broken in: 'I did'. A woman?—that is different; even in the England of the Civil War all chivalry has not perished with the Cavaliers. It was probably with a smile that the Governor let his prisoners go. The incident was closed—no, not quite; not quite closed until, just half a century later, in Westminster Abbey the last flagstone was lowered into place above the body of Sir William Temple, the builder of the Triple Alliance and Privy Councillor of Charles II, laid now to his final rest beside Dorothy Osborne, the wife of forty years.

But the course of this love that had so long to run, was far from running smooth at first. William Temple was just twenty when he watched the woman's wit of Dorothy Osborne, herself twenty-one, thus save her brother in the Isle of Wight. That day, if she set one prisoner free, she made another. How the lovers' acquaintance had first begun, we do not know; but a long period of trouble was still to pass before it ended happily in marriage. 'The accidents for seven years of that amour,' writes Temple's sister, Lady Giffard, 'might make a history, and the letters that passed between them a volume.' At this moment Temple, the son of Sir John Temple, Member of Parliament for Chichester, Master of the Rolls and a Privy Councillor for Ireland, was just going abroad to travel after two not very profitable years at Emmanuel College, Cambridge; where he had found tennis and other occupations more amusing than Dr. Cudworth's 'harsh studies of logick and phylosophy'. 'I have heard him say,' continues his sister in her Memoir, 'if it had bin possible in the two years time he past there to forgit all he had learn't before, he must certainely have done

it.' Dorothy Osborne, on her side, came of a northern family which had settled in Essex in the mid-fifteenth century. At the close of the sixteenth her great-grandfather, John Osborne, six times Member of Parliament, husband of a niece of the famous scholar Sir John Cheke, and father of twenty-two children, bought Dorothy's future home, Chicksands Priory in Bedfordshire, a dissolved monastery of Gilbertines. Her father, Sir Peter, had been Lieutenant-Governor of Guernsey for twentyone years when the Civil War broke out; then, when the island declared for the Parliament, he held Castle Cornet for the King. After three years of siege, cheated of supplies by the Governor of Jersey and sickened with empty promises by the Court, he was superseded and withdrew to St. Malo. Thither Dorothy and her brother were now travelling to join the old Cavalier, when they fell in with Temple, whose father, as we have seen, was sitting in the hated Parliament. Thus the lovers were crossed from the first, like another Romeo and Juliet, by the factions of their parents. Further, each family thought it could make a better match elsewhere. So that Temple, lingering on enchanted ground at St. Malo, was soon sent packing on his travels by a stern message from home. But it was too late. A sympathy, stronger than fathers or brothers or worldly considerations could ever break, had already sprung up between the handsome, passionate, slightly egotistical youth with his brown curling hair, and the rather 'stately' young woman whose pale oval face with its long, straight nose and great dark eyes, full at once of humour and melancholy, still gazes out of its frame of black hair, in the portrait at Broadlands. They were parted now; but down the long Paris road he carried with him the memory of their days together, and of the

lonely little house on the isle of Herm, by Guernsey, that they had seen from their ship sailing to St. Malo; as Dorothy was to remind him years afterwards in one of her most charming passages: 'Do you remember Arme and the little house there? Shall we go thither? That's next to being out of the world. There we might live like Baucis and Philemon, grow old together in our little cottage, and for our charity to some ship-wrecked strangers obtain the blessing of dying both at the same time. How idly I talk; 'tis because the story pleases me—none in Ovid so much. I remember I cried when I read it. Methought they were the perfectest characters of a contented marriage, where piety and love were all their wealth, and in their poverty feasted the gods when rich men shut them out. I am called away—farewell.'

What happened in the next few years remains obscure. At some point the lovers came to regard themselves as plighted; though Temple laughingly wagered ten pounds against Dorothy's constancy, to be paid him on the day she married some one else. He stayed in France two years (1648-50), saw Dorothy again in London, was sent abroad by his anxious father to the Low Countries for another fifteen months (1651-2). Meanwhile, since 1649, she had been living mainly at home, in a quiet broken only by the indefatigable efforts of her brother Henry to get her married. Perhaps she had faded in Temple's memory. After a letter from Breda in March 1652, there followed a silence of nine months; but at last, as the year drew to its close, word came to Chicksands announcing the wanderer's return to England. On Christmas Eve Dorothy sat down and wrote in answer the first letter we still possess, beginning: 'Sir,-You may please to let my old servant (i.e. lover), as you call him, know that I

confess I owe much to his merits...; but for the ten pound he claims, it is not yet due, and I think you may do well to persuade him (as a friend) to put it in the number of his desperate debts, for 'tis a very uncertain one.'

With this reference to Temple's old wager against her constancy opens that correspondence, containing some eighty letters of hers and one of his, which covers the period of two years and a day till the lovers were wed at Christmas, 1654. There are no more delightful letters in English. Love-letters—and indeed letters in general—are a province of literature for which no spectacled Aristotle has yet laid down the laws. But we may have views about them; as we shall see, Dorothy herself had. The writing of letters is an applied art which turns into a pure one, as they lose their original purpose; the readers for whom they are written come to die, the matter they express grows obsolete and immaterial, and yet by charm of manner alone they may still hold an eavesdropping public for which they were never meant. The embroidery preserves the dress, when the stuff itself is long threadbare with the years. True, the subjects are not always ephemeral; a Pliny may watch Vesuvius engulfing five cities, a Sévigné see Fouquet on his trial. But these are lucky chances; good letters remain immortal though they chronicle the smallest beer, and describe merely the visits of cousins and the maladies of aunts. Nor is this because time gives back with interest the value it at first takes away from little things, so that hairpins grow precious in a thousand years and we would give its weight in gold for the description of a dinner-party in the age of Alfred; it is because the real interest of good letters is one that years cannot lessen—the attraction of human personality. To preserve the charm of some

character with vivid responses to life—that is their achievement. A diary like Pepys's may be even more intimately revealing; but how many books are there in the world like his? Besides, a good correspondent, like a good conversationist, is better addressing others than himself; and we may little guess how pleasing people can be, until they try to please. The art of letters is, indeed, the most social and one of the most civilized of literary forms; it stands nearer even than sermon or moral essay to the art of life; the eighteenth century knew its value; and it does small credit to our modern culture that we have so suffered it to decay. To combine sensitiveness and good sense; to be spontaneous yet delicate, natural without vulgarity and negligent without slovenliness; to show at once gaiety and grace; to possess a mind of one's own, a style of one's own, one's own way of seeing and describing life's brief trifles—that was the eighteenth-century ideal of conversation; and those seem to me, in all ages, the essentials of good letter-writing.

Small wonder, then, that women, with their keener sense for the graces of life, should have excelled since the days of Héloïse in this branch of literature, so that it is dominated by figures like Dorothy Osborne, Madame de Sévigné, Madame du Deffand, Madame d'Épinay, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, Lady Mary Wortley Montague, Maria Edgeworth, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Jane Welsh Carlyle (both of whom write so much better than their more famous husbands). Even their most successful male rivals, like Horace Walpole and poor Cowper winding his worsted, have sometimes been markedly feminine. I have noticed the same thing in my own experience; and I have certainly known women who, with that remarkable power their sex sometimes shows of withstanding any

amount of education, could only spell precariously, and yet wrote far better and more vivid letters than some very distinguished writers, alive and dead.

This is not simply, I think, because women tend by nature to have more grace, as men more strength; or because they have a greater need, and a greater wish to please. They have tended also, ever since civilization allowed many of them a good deal of leisure, to have their originality and their natural spirit less worn down than men, either in the mill of education or on the grindstone of active life. It is easier for hands unroughened by toil to keep their lightness of touch. This is not merely a vague generalization; it has been noticed in widelydifferent ages what a natural command women may possess over their native tongue in its most living and unpedantic purity. It was remarked under the Roman Republic; it was remarked again in the France of Louis XIV, by Vaugelas: 'Il vaut mieux consulter les femmes,' says he, 'et ceux qui n'ont pas étudié, que ceux qui sont bien savants en la langue grecque et en la latine'; and a century later Diderot is even more emphatic: 'C'est que le bon style est dans le cœur; violà pourquoi tant de femmes disent et écrivent comme des anges, sans avoir appris ni à dire ni à écrire, et pourquoi tant de pédants diront et écriront mal toute leur vie, quoiqu'ils n'aient cessé d'étudier sans apprendre'.

Here lies part of the charm in the letters of women like Dorothy Osborne; but only part. Letters need more than style; particularly love-letters. For these last are apt to be dull reading; theirs is at once the most eternal and the most ephemeral of all subjects. They have indeed two essential themes—the facts of the situation and the feelings of the lovers; and the facts have all the more need to

be vivid since the feelings, however thrilling for the persons concerned, tend to be so monotonous for everyone else. The cooing of turtles is agreeable; but exciting it is not. Accordingly love-letters are the better for a love that does not run smooth, but fights its way through alarms and despairs, surprises and vicissitudes. The feelings, too, need variation. One remedy is to quarrel; but there are less drastic methods: lovers can easily—none more easily—be scolded or mocked, tantalized and teased. In a word, the two great dangers of love-letters are sentimentality and boredom; the two great safeguards, with these as with other letters, are gaiety and grace.

So much for the art of letter-writing; it is time to return to Dorothy Osborne, whose romance we have delayed almost as long as her recalcitrant relatives. Certainly in these love-letters of hers the struggles with circumstance are not wanting. Her brother Henry in particular (not the same brother, it seems, as was with her in the Isle of Wight—that was probably a younger one called Robin) set his face violently against her match with Temple, whom he disliked and despised as being an adventurer and an atheist; although it looks almost as if the real crime of Dorothy's lover was simply his love for her, and her brother's real motive a passionate jealousy. Eight years her elder, he was yet intensely possessive in his feeling: 'he is much of your sister's humour,' writes Dorothy to Temple, 'and many times wishes me a husband that loved me as well as he does (though he seems to doubt the possibility on't), but never desires that I should love that husband with any passion, and plainly tells me so. He says it would not be so well for him, nor perhaps for me, that I should; for he is of opinion that all passions have more of trouble than of satisfaction in them.' (This

seems rather a flimsy excuse.) 'But, seriously,' she goes on, 'I many times receive letters from him, that were they seen without any address to me or his name, nobody would believe they were from a brother; and I cannot but tell him sometimes that, sure, he mistakes and sends me letters that were meant to his mistress, till he swears to me that he has none.' It is a curious coincidence that the equally devoted sister of Temple here referred to. the future Lady Giffard, was destined, after losing her husband in the first month of her marriage, to spend most of her life with her brother as almost a second wife to him. Meanwhile, at all events, Henry Osborne gave Dorothy no peace; until, if she ever read Webster (as she certainly read Shakespeare), she must have found the relations of the Duchess of Malfi with her brother Duke Ferdinand painfully like her own. He lectured her, he tried to intercept her lover's letters (only to be defeated by the trusty carrier's stout denials that he had any), he besieged her with rival suitors, he lost his temper with her for rejecting them. 'I could tell you such a story ('tis too long to be written) as would make you see (what I never discover'd in myself before) that I am a valiant lady. In earnest we have had such a skirmish, and upon so foolish an occasion, as I cannot tell which is strangest. . . . All the people that I had ever in my life refused were brought again upon the stage, like Richard III's ghosts, to reproach me withal; and all the kindness his discoveries could make I had for you was laid to my charge. . . . Well, 'twas a pretty lecture, and I grew warm with it after a while; in short, we came so near an absolute falling out, that 'twas time to give over, and we said so much then that we have hardly spoken a word together since. But 'tis wonderful to see what curtseys and legs pass between us; and as

before we were thought the kindest brother and sister, we are certainly the most complimental couple in England.' Nine months later the battle is still raging: 'He renounced me again, and I defied him, but both in as civil language as it would permit, and parted in great anger with the usual ceremony of a leg and a courtesy, that you would have died with laughing to have seen us.'

Unhappy as she was, it will be seen that she had a very saving sense of humour. In the same way though as weary of her suitors as any Penelope—she 'would live in a hollow tree to avoid them'-she manages to get a good deal of amusement out of them too; alternately laughing at them because they are so ridiculous, and teasing her lover with them because they are so attractive. The most engaging is Henry Cromwell, son of the Lord General, the grim Mrs. Hutchinson's 'debauched ungodly cavalier'; he is kept busy getting Dorothy Irish greyhounds on which her heart is set; and when his father dissolves the Parliament in April 1653, she cannot resist reminding Temple with a smile: 'if I had been so wise as to have taken hold of the offer was made me by H. C., I might have been in a fair way of preferment'. What would the Protector, one wonders, have made of this ironic daughterin-law? But an even grander suitor is Sir Justinian Isham, Bart., of Lamport (of a name now more happily associated with the memory of Boswell), whom she generally refers to as 'the Emperor' on the strength of his Christian name; a county magnate, a very Solomon and Daniel in one, with four grown-up daughters. She promises Temple, by way of consolation, to put in a good word for him with one or other of these young women, in case she becomes their step-mother. But it was as well for Sir Justinian she did not. 'Oh, my conscience! we should all have

joined against him as the common enemy, for those poor young wenches are as weary of his government as I could have been. He gives them such precepts as they say my Lord of Dorchester gives his wife, and keeps them so much prisoners to a vile house he has in Northamptonshire, that if once I had but let them loose, they and his learning would have been sufficient to have made him mad without my help; but his good fortune would have it otherwise, to which I'll leave him.' Justinian's learning had indeed led him into one unlucky composition not meant for his mistress's eye. 'Lord! what would I give that I had a Latin letter of his for you, that he writ to a great friend at Oxford, where he gives a long and learned character of me; 'twould serve you to laugh at this seven year.' The worst of her faults, according to this seventeenth-century Sir Willoughby, was 'a height (he would not call it pride) that was, as he had heard, the humour of my family; and the best of my commendations was, that I was capable of being company and conversation for him'. Not that the sage could not also be gallant: hearing Dorothy had an ague, he forthwith had one himself, 'so natural a sympathy there is between us'. But at last finding even agues unavailing, Sir Justinian turned elsewhere: 'it was not mine, it seems, to have an emperor; the spiteful man, merely to vex me, has gone and married my countrywoman, Lord Lee's daughter. What a multitude of willow garlands shall I wear before I die! I think I had best make them into faggots this cold weather, the flame they would make in a chimney would be of more use to me than that which was in the hearts of all those that gave them me, and would last as long.'

Other wooers as provokingly went and died. 'Never anybody had such luck with lovers; what with marrying

and what with dying they all leave me. Just now I have news brought me of the death of an old rich knight that has promised me this seven years to marry me whensoever his wife died, and now he's dead before her, and has left her such a widow, it makes me mad to think on't: £1,200 a year jointure and £20,000 in money and personal estate, and all this I might have had if Mr. Death had been pleased to have taken her instead of him. Well, who can help these things? But, since I cannot have him, would you had her! What say you? Shall I speak a good word for you?' The old knight in question seems to have been of the modest age of fourscore and four; three months later there is another victim, Sir Robert Cook, aged a bare sixty-seven: 'ah, that good old man, I would so fain have had him! But I have no luck to them, they all die. If he would have married me first, and then have died, 'twould not have griev'd me half as much as it does now. Yet I was offered a new servant t'other day, and after two hours' talk and that they had told me that he had as good as two thousand pounds a year in present, and a thousand more to come, I had not the curiosity to ask who 'twas; which they took so ill that I think I shall hear no more on't. Never man made worse bargain than you, when you played for the ten pounds I am to pay you when I marry. In conscience now, what would you give me to be quit on't?' They did not, however, always die. James Beverly survives, though his heart is quite broken for her. He had been at Emmanuel with Temple; and now, falling in love with Dorothy, put into her hand a love-letter from himself, pretending it had come out of Northamptonshire. Her reply was to throw it unopened on the fire, whispering (for she had kept her maid and the rector's wife in the room for her better

defence) that she thought that 'the quickest and best way of answering it'. It was in vain that 'poor James' persisted; a fortnight later 'he says 'twould pity you to hear what sad complaints he makes; and, but that he has not the heart to hang himself, he could be very well contented to be out of the world'. Six weeks later still he is pitying Dorothy for giving herself 'to the proudest, imperious, insulting, ill-natured man that ever was; one that before he has had me a week shall use me with contempt and believe that the favour was of his side'. With which parting fling at his rival he is out of our story.

Other people's husbands escape hardly better than her own suitors from this lively tongue. One 'pretty gentleman' of her acquaintance has been transformed by marriage 'into the direct shape of a great boy newly come from school. To see him wholly taken up with running on errands for his wife, and teaching her little dog tricks! And this was the best of him; for when he was at leisure to talk, he would suffer nobody else to do it, and by what he said, and the noise he made, if you had heard it, you would have concluded him drunk with joy that he had a wife and a pack of hounds. I was so weary on't that I made haste home, and could not but think of the change all the way, till my brother (who was with me) thought me sad, and to put me in better humour, said he believed I repented me I had not this gentleman, now I saw how absolutely his wife governed him. But I assured him, that though I thought it very fit such as he should be governed, I should not like the employment by no means.' Then there is Mr. Smith who has wedded my Lady Sunderland, Waller's 'Sacharissa', and treats his grand wife with such punctilious deference 'that they say 'tis worth one's going twenty miles to see it. All our ladies are mightily pleased with the example, but I do not find that the men intend to follow it, and I'll undertake Sir Solomon Justinian wishes her in the Indies, for fear she should pervert his new wife.' Then, too, there is Lady Sandys, who went to Winchester races with Col. Paunton, the biggest gambler of his day and the eponymous hero of Panton Street in Piccadilly; and there meeting her husband was modestly invited by him to his house near by, as more comfortable than a crowded inn. But, no, she would not leave her Colonel and his friends. Would they not come too? No, they would not. 'Only my Lady grew kind at parting and said, indeed if Tom Paunton and J. Morton and the rest would have gone, she could have been contented to have taken his offer.' (Life, we may note, does not seem to have been always quite so grim in Puritan England as is sometimes supposed.) Another unfortunate husband is Lord Leicester, who after forty years of wedlock has suddenly taken it into his head to try to get the mastery of his lady; with poor success, however. 'What an age do we live in,' Dorothy concludes, 'when 'tis a miracle if in ten couple that are married, two of them live so as not to publish to the world that they cannot agree.'

She has indeed very definite views on the whole subject of matrimony. Optimistic she is not; quite a short while back, indeed, she 'was quite out of love with a thing called marriage'. She sees with a pitying mockery the decay of love it brings. Her cousin Franklin used to have the fault of 'kissing his wife before company, a foolish trick that young married men, it seems, are apt to; he has left it long since, I suppose'. Yet she cannot resign herself to face such a falling-off: 'I could be infinitely

better satisfied with a husband that had never loved me, in hope that he might, than with one that began to love me less than he had done'. And she grows bitter in her contempt for marriages that are mercenary and loveless from the first. Her neighbour, Lady Grey de Ruthin, is engaged to a Mr. Yelverton: "tis the most troublesome, busy, talking little thing that ever was born: his tongue goes like the clack of a mill, but to much less purpose. . . . You would wonder to see how tired she is with his impertinences, and yet how pleased she is to think she shall have a great estate with him. . . . Two or three great glistering jewels has bribed her to wink at all his faults, and she hears him as unmoved and unconcerned as if another were to marry him.' That so many marriages end in tears is mainly, she thinks; the women's fault; seeing that they usually show themselves more quarrelsome in their own families than men. Even when the husband is unsatisfactory, the wife can at least save appearances (we shall meet again this curiously strong dread in Dorothy of public ridicule), 'as a kinswoman of ours that had a husband who was not always himself: and when he was otherwise, his humour was to rise in the night, and with two bedstaves labour upon the table an hour together. She took care every night to lay a great cushion upon the table for him to strike on, that nobody might hear him, and so discover his madness. But 'tis a sad thing when all one's happiness is only that the world does not know you are miserable.' But this view of the wifely duty of providing cushions does not prevent her having a high standard for husbands. She has indeed drawn a full-length portrait of her ideal, too long to quote, in a letter which can compare for wit and style with any of the Characters in Earle or Overbury; and by

the greatness of her expectations she irritated all the young men at a country house in Kent into 'a custom of expressing anything that is nowhere but in fiction by the name of "Mrs. O——'s husband". . . . They laugh to hear me say that one unkind word would destroy all the satisfaction of my life, and that I should expect our kindness should increase every day, if it were possible, but never lessen. All this is perfect nonsense in their opinion; but I should not doubt the convincing them if I could hope I should ever be so happy as to be

Yours.'

Was she disappointed? A little, we must believe; but not, perhaps, essentially. She was a realistic young woman as well as a romantic one. There lies part of her charm. For the purely romantic and the purely realistic are equally chilling in their opposite ways. In one respect, indeed, she will slightly shock her more romantic admirers. She is inflexibly resolved not to wed Temple in the teeth of the whole world: 'I confess that I have an humour will not suffer me to expose myself to people's scorn'. She is prepared to keep her faith to him; to refuse all the matches her friends can find her, all the wealth the world can give; but she will not be 'esteemed a ridiculous person', making a love-match in a cottage 'to satisfy a giddy humour'. She does not want praise; she does not fear anger; but she flinches at contempt.

There are even times when she takes a touch of primness. She finds extremely shocking the idea of a woman loving before she is loved. She will launch out into little sermons that yet possess a strange charm in their half-childish gravity and the sudden laughing apology that cuts them short: 'what think you, might I not preach

with Mr. Marshall for a wager?'; or again: 'One would think it were I that had heard the three sermons and were trying to make a fourth; these are truths that might become a pulpit better than Mr. Arbry's predictions. But lest you should think I have as many worms in my head as he, I'll give over in time.' All the same, she means what she says. She has even a morbid sense of guilt at moments about their passion as 'but a refined degree of madness', which reason and religion should have better controlled. And she is outraged at her brother's suggestion that Temple is an infidel: 'it must suppose one to be a devil in human shape'.

And yet she herself finds in religion not so much joy, as a rather wistful comfort in a bleak and bitter world. Behind all her gaiety lies a deep sadness about life, based both on reason and temperament. She has learnt not to expect overmuch on earth, where with so much sorrow goes so little joy 'that one may see 'tis merely intended to keep us alive withal'. Strengthened as this strain in her must have been by her unhappy youth, it is clear, I think, that she was born with it; 'my mother, I remember, used to say I needed no tears to persuade my troubles, and that I had looked so far beyond them that, were all the friends I had in the world dead, more could not be expected than such a sadness in my eye'. She is not 'apt to hope'; and good fortune comes to her 'like the sun to the inhabitants of Greenland' who, when it goes, look for six months of night to follow.

It is little wonder, then, if under the strain of loneliness and persecution, with her mother dead and her father dying, she broke down at one moment and begged Temple for his own sake to give her up for ever. 'She's happier by much,' she writes of a worldly friend at this time, 'than I shall ever be, but I do not envy her; may she long enjoy it, and I an early and a quiet grave, free from the trouble of this busy world, where all with passion pursue their own interests at their neighbour's charges; where nobody is pleased but somebody complains on't; and where 'tis impossible to be without giving and receiving injuries. You would know what I would be at, and how I intend to dispose of myself. Alas! were I in my own disposal, you should come to my grave to be resolved; but grief alone will not kill.'

Happily she possessed in Temple a lover with the essential gift of knowing when not to take his mistress at her word; or at least the determination not to do so now. He would hear of no renunciations-would she, in her heart, ever have forgiven him if he had? For genuine as was her despair, no less genuine was the passion for him that she keeps half veiled in a mixture of mockery and modesty, mischief and reticence. 'Love is a terrible word,' she will write back, when he has seized ardently on some unguarded phrase of hers, 'and I should blush if anything but a letter accused me on't. Pray be merciful and let it run "friendship" in my next charge.' Yet she lives on his letters. 'Your last letter came like a pardon to one upon the block'; or 'never anyone was so defeated as I was to find none'; or 'I chid my maid for waking me in the morning, till she stopped my mouth with saying she had letters for me. I had not patience to stay till I could rise, but made her tie up all the curtains to let in the light; and amongst some others I quickly found my dear letter that was first to be read, and which made all the rest not worth the reading.' As for writing to him: 'nothing that is paper can 'scape me, when I have time to write, and 'tis to you'. One night her brother and a

friend are talking by the fire and 'amongst other things (which I did not at all mind) they fell into a discourse of flying; and both agreed that it was very possible to find out a way that people might fly like birds, and despatch their journeys so: I, that had not said a word all night, started up at that, and desired they would say a little more in it, for I had not marked the beginning; but instead of that, they both fell into so violent a laughing, that I should appear so much concerned in such an art; but they little knew of what use it might have been to me.'

And so in the end such fondness and persistence triumphed, and Dorothy Osborne came, without wings or broomstick, to her lover's arms at last. Misfortune dogged her to the close: she caught small-pox just before her marriage should have taken place, and with it lost her beauty; but on Christmas Day, 1654, she and Temple were wedded in St. Giles'-in-the-Fields.

For us it is not quite such a happy ending; for with it end her letters too, except for a few stray ones of minor interest. But before we leave her correspondence, a word may be said of its merely literary qualities; for every time I read her, I am struck afresh by these. They matter less, indeed, than the personality they reveal, one of the most lovable in all literature; but her character we remember, her gift of language is a recurrent surprise. Enough has been quoted to show her power; but it is worth concentrating for a moment on this matter of her style, and her ideas about it. These are definite enough. 'All letters,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> There is an entry in her brother's diary, belonging to the period just after she had bowed to Temple's refusal to give her up, which makes pleasantly ironic reading: 'Jan. 13, Friday morninge. I came to Chicksands before dinner. I found Mr. Temple here and my sister broke with him, God be praised.'

methinks,' says she, 'should be free and easy as one's discourse; not studied as an oration, nor made up of hard words like a charm. 'Tis an admirable thing, to see how some people will labour to find out terms that may obscure a plain sense. Like a gentleman I knew, who would never say "the weather grew cold", but that "winter began to salute us". I have no patience for such coxcombs, and cannot blame an old uncle of mine that threw the standish (ink-pot) at his man's head because he writ a letter for him where, instead of saying (as his master bid him) that "he would have writ himself, but that he had the gout in his hand", he said that "the gout in his hand would not permit him to put pen to

paper".'

Certainly she practised her own theory. But her writing is more than merely plain and honest English; in her lighter vein she often recalls the vivid prose of Elizabethan comedy, until one feels at moments as if she had been brought into the world, not by Sir Peter Osborne, but by Shakespeare, somewhere between Beatrice and Rosalind. She complains, for instance, of her goldsmith's utter lack of invention: 'What a strange fellow this goldsmith is, he has a head fit for nothing but horns. . . . It makes me think of the fellow that could paint nothing but a flower-de-luce who, when he met with one that was so firmly resolved to have a lion for his sign that there was no persuading him on't, "Well," says the painter, "let it be a lion then, but it shall be as like a flower-de-luce as e'er you saw".' Surely this touches Bottom! Similarly in her serious moods she has a literary quality that echoes the wistful quietness of Traherne, or of Izaak Walton, whose Angler came out in this very year 1653. One such passage is well known, in which she describes 'a common

that lies hard by the house, where a great many young wenches keep sheep and cows, and sit in the shade singing of ballads'; but no less lovely is her picture of a summer evening's loneliness: 'Last night I was in the garden till eleven o'clock. It was the sweetest night that e'er I saw. The garden looked so well, and the jasmine smelt beyond all perfume. And yet I was not pleased. The place had all the charms it used to have when I was most satisfied with it, and, had you been there, I should have liked it much more than ever I did; but that not being, it was no more to me than the next field, and only served me for a place to roam in without disturbance.'

I confess that to preserve these letters I would gladly sacrifice all the haystacks and wagon-loads of theological and political controversy which that quarrelsome age produced, including the prose of Milton himself. Real grace is so rare a thing in English prose, as compared with French. But there is another wider issue that these letters raise. How enormously, one feels after reading them, culture matters up to a certain point! And beyond that point, how little! Dorothy Osborne's charm is essentially that of a very delicate and sensitive personality, taught to write by reading a few good books-the Bible, Shakespeare, Cowley, and her beloved Jeremy Taylor. French romances, like those of Mademoiselle de Scudéry, she also devoured; but how ill-read and ignorant she would be thought by many a modern miss! And yet how often do we meet to-day as good a writer and as attractive a character? Are we surfeited, comes the question, with the good things, not only of the material, but of the intellectual world as well? Do we travel through it in too American a fashion, with no time to digest a tenth of what we swallow, or are forcibly stuffed with? For,

after all, this young woman had the essential things—the secret of style, not only in letters, but in life. She had doubtless never heard of Botticelli; she very likely thought the sun went round the earth; and yet—— So the crudest science-student to-day is a Solomon compared with Socrates; and yet characters like Socrates seem scarcely to grow commoner. It is a lasting riddle how little difference, beyond a certain point, the increase of knowledge makes. May not the modern educationalist have grounds for misgiving here?

At all events there is little more to tell of Dorothy Osborne from the point where her letters end and her married life begins. Her husband rose rapidly in the world of diplomacy; he concluded, with an unexampled quickness due to the convincing impression of honesty he gave, the Triple Alliance between England, Holland, and Sweden, the first of that great series of coalitions which for the next century and a half were to curb the dominance of France-in Pepys's judgement 'the one good public thing that hath been done since the King came into England'; he was a main instrument in that all-important wedding of Princess Mary to William of Orange. In these triumphs Dorothy Lady Temple shared, admired to the last for her letters and a trusted friend in her old age of Queen Mary; but, as she foresaw, life brought her its full share of sorrow too. Seven of her children died in infancy; her one remaining daughter, Diana, was carried off by small-pox in her youth; her one remaining son, John, having risen to be Secretary at War under King William, threw himself a week later, his pockets filled with stones, from a boat that was shooting London Bridge, because he felt too deeply that he had ill-advised the King; and her own death was hastened

by sorrow for the Queen's (1695). So after forty years William Temple was left once more alone; there in the shades of Moor Park, where a new and strangely different love from his was springing up between his moody Irish secretary and young Esther Johnson, could he find after all, one wonders, in the long career he looked back on, any other piece of diplomacy that had really mattered so much to him as a girl's quick tact in the Isle of Wight, half a century before? For kingdoms pass, and treaties snap like rotten threads, and all our tortuous statecraft is only a cumbrous machinery to help make man's life worth living; it is only a means to that elusive end; and the best it can hope for is to maintain a world in which human beings as lovable as Dorothy Osborne can find, and be, and forget themselves.

Note.—There are two excellent editions of Dorothy Osborne's Letters, by Judge Parry (1888; reprinted in Wayfarer's Library and Everyman's Library), and by G. C. Moore-Smith (1928). Admirable as the latter is for the student, the ordinary reader may, I think, get more enjoyment from the other with its modernized spelling and punctuation.

#### OLIVER BRETT

#### A WARNING TO COLLECTORS

It is time that the rules of book-collecting should be rigidly laid down, or the chaos in that romantic sect will only be comparable to that in the world of Bridge. In both games the financial results of doubtful rules are apt to be disastrous to the players. Among the many vexed questions that are argued in those places where bookcollectors forgather, one of the most important is the priority of English and American first editions. There are some who maintain that the first edition follows the flag, and that if the author is English it is the first edition published in England that counts. In my opinion such a position is not tenable. Shelley's Adonais, for instance, was first published at Pisa in 1821, and the book did not appear in England until Metcalfe published it at Cambridge in 1829. The Pisa edition has always been considered the first, and people have paid over £1000 for it in that belief. In this case there is eight years difference in time, but it is obvious that there is no logical difference between eight years, eight months, or eight days.

During the nineteenth century other examples occurred. Charles Lamb's second series of Elia Essays was published by Cary in Philadelphia in 1828 and did not appear in London till Moxon published it in 1833. Carlyle's Sartor Resartus was first privately printed in London by Fraser in 1834, but, as only fifty-eight copies were printed, the second edition, published by Munroe in Boston in 1836, has some value. Meredith's Evan

Harrington was published by Harper in New York in 1860; the second edition by Bradbury and Evans in London in 1861. Stevenson's Ebb Tide was published by Stone & Kimbal in Chicago in 1894, several months before Heinemann published it in London. Swinburne's only novel was published by Mosher in Portland, Maine, in 1901 under the title A Year's Letters. It was not till 1905 that Chatto & Windus published it in England as Love's Cross Currents. It is only of late years, however, that the problem has become serious, since the sums of money involved in its correct solution have become large. The innumerable rare pamphlets of Mr. Kipling, published in America for the preservation of copyright, command very high prices, and have always been acknowledged as first editions by collectors. If it were established that, because Mr. Kipling is an Englishman, these American pamphlets are not genuine first editions, their possessors would immediately be involved in very heavy loss. In the same way Mr. Bernard Shaw's Dramatic Opinions and Essays, published by Brentano in New York in 1906, takes acknowledged precedence of the Constable edition of 1907, as does the New York edition of Mr. Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, published by Heubsh in 1916. Unfortunately, such acknowledgements are not universal, and the principle has never been completely accepted. American authors have often been printed first in England. This applies especially to Henry James. Hawthorne's Marble Faun was also first published in England under the title Transformation, and this Smith, Elder edition of 1860 is the genuine first. But the habit of publishing their books first in America has widely increased of late years among English writers. In some cases the difference in time is large enough to place the

matter beyond dispute. Mr. Gordon Bottomley's Vision of Giorgione, for instance, was published in America in 1910 and in England in 1920. Mr. T. F. Powys's Soliloguy of a Hermit was published in New York in 1916, in London in 1918. Mr. Wells's History of Mr. Polly was published in New York in 1909, in London in 1910. Mr. Yeats's Cutting of an Agate was published in New York in 1912, in London not till 1919. In each case the London publication is the second edition. Sometimes the London publication is not even the second. In the case of Mr. Yeats's Where There is Nothing, for instance, the first edition of which consists of only ten copies, printed in New York in 1902, it is the third edition that Buller printed in 1903 and called the first volume of 'Plays for an Irish Theatre'. Perhaps the 'follow the flag' theory can be reduced to its ultimate absurdity by the example of Mr. George Moore's Perronik the Fool. This work was first published by Boni & Liveright in New York in 1924. The second edition was also published in New York by Rogers & Rudge in 1926. The third edition was published by the Hours Press, at Chapelle Réanville, Eure, France, in 1928. It has not yet been published in England at all, and if we wish to 'follow the flag' we must be presumed to be still awaiting the appearance of the first edition.

Bibliographers have given continual attention to this question. Mr. McDonald, the Philadelphia bibliographer of D. H. Lawrence, has carefully pointed out the exact dates of the American and English editions of the latter's works:

The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd .	New York	April 1st	1914
	London	April	1914
Women in Love	New York	Nov.	1920
	London	May	1921

Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious	New York	May	1921
Psychoanalysis and the Officenserous	London	July	1923
Sea and Sardinia	New York	Dec. 12th	1921
Sea and Sardina.	London	April	1923
Aaron's Rod	New York	April	1922
Aaron's Rod	London	June	1922
Fantasia of the Unconscious	New York	Oct. 23rd	1922
Tantasia of the Superior	London	Sept.	1923
England, My England	New York	Oct. 24th	1922
Diigitalia, 1/1/ 22-8	London	Jan.	1924
Studies in Classic American Literature	New York	Aug.	1923
Statistic Comments	London	June	1924
Birds, Beasts and Flowers	New York	Oct. 9th	1923
211 409	London	Nov.	1923

Mr. H. V. Marrot has given even closer attention to the works of Mr. Galsworthy:

The Little Dream	New York		
	London	June 30th	
Moods, Songs and Doggerels .	New York		
	London	April 17th	1912
The Inn of Tranquillity .	New York	Oct. 19th	
	London	Oct. 24th	1912
The Little Man	 New York	May 1st	1915
	London	May 6th	1915
A Sheaf	New York		
And the second of the	London	Oct. 12th	1916
Beyond	New York		
	London	Aug. 30th	1917
Five Tales	New York		
	London	July 25th	1918
Saint's Progress	New York	June 20th	
	London	Oct. 16th	1919
Addresses in America	New York	Aug. 15th	1919
	London	Nov. 25th	1919
Awakening	New York	Nov. 12th	
	London	Nov. 18th	1920
To Let	New York	Sept. 2nd	1921
	London	Sept. 29th	1921
		to delicate the second	

The Forsyte Saga.		New York Mar. 24th 1922
, ,		London May 25th 1922
The White Monkey		New York Oct. 24th 1924
·		London Oct. 30th 1924
Swan Song		New York July 10th 1928
3		London July 12th 1928

Collectors have at present widely ignored these carefully collected facts, but they can only do so at their peril. The London edition of The Forsyte Saga, published two months after the New York edition, has fetched as much as £20 in the open market. Yet it is clearly a second edition, worth only a few shillings. Bibliographical research will in time disclose similar facts about the works of other modern writers. The wise collector, therefore. will endeavour to forestall such disclosure by purchasing early and cheaply the necessary American volumes. The honest bookseller will cease evading the question by pretending the American edition does not exist, or begging it by using the phrase 'first English edition', instead of the more truthful 'second edition'. For the eventual rule cannot logically be evaded. The first edition of a book must be the first time that it is printed, without regard to the place of publication. It is only when the book is published simultaneously in two places that the nationality of the author may bestow a preference.

#### VIRGINIA WOOLF

# THE ESSAYS OF AUGUSTINE BIRRELL<sup>1</sup>

'But it is not bedtime,' a lady was heard to protest the other night. When assured that the clock had already struck twelve, she murmured that the clock might say what it liked, but that she must finish her book. And what was her book? It was a book by Mr. Birrell. In fact, our friend had strewn the floor—like the learned pig in the picture—with three robust red volumes containing The Collected Essays and Addresses of Augustine Birrell. It was these that she was engaged in sampling; it was these that kept her from her bed when the chimes of midnight were ringing and the voice of duty called.

Such being the truth and nothing more than the truth, it may be worth while to attempt to justify her defiance of discipline; to try to discover what are the qualities that make us slip from the end of one essay by Mr. Birrell to the beginning of another, and so on through page after page when not only is the hour late, but when, to tell the truth, more serious and more learned volumes are shut with a snap on the stroke of eleven. In those words, perhaps, some glimpse of the reason sought for is to be found. One reads Mr. Birrell for pleasure. Nobody has ever, in the mercantile sense of the term, read Mr. Birrell for profit. It seems doubtful whether tutors bent on steering young men into the safe pasturage of scholarships and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Collected Essays and Addresses of Augustine Birrell. Three Volumes. J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.

fellowships have ever counselled them to commit Obiter Dicta to memory. There is very little talk in Mr. Birrell's pages of schools and influences, and origins and developments, and how one style grew out of another; no new theory of poetry is advanced, no key warranted to unlock all the doors of poetry is struck out. And since Nature has so contrived it that we only feel highly virtuous when we are also feeling slightly uncomfortable, there has been a note of apology in the tones of Mr. Birrell's admirers as if to be found reading Obiter Dicta or Res Judicatae or Men, Women and Books was to be caught drinking champagne in the middle of the morning—a proceeding too pleasant to be right. If, on the other hand, one has muddled one's wits for an hour by the clock over some philosophical treatise. and come to feel that all Shakespeare is a matter of mathematics, then very justly one bruits the fact abroad, claims the esteem of one's friends, and leaves the book lying about with a marker stuck in the middle.

So, then, Mr. Birrell is no philosophical critic. But once that is said we have to explain why it is that one feels, nevertheless, no lack of substance in his pages—they are not airy flimsy gossip—they are not dainties made to serve up with the soufflé at luncheon parties. They have, on the contrary, a bluffness, a toughness, even a grittiness about them which makes one suspect that if it be true that Mr. Birrell has not mined deeply in the darker galleries of thought, he has, it may be, done a day's work in the open air. There is something of the man of action in his style. He comes in with his hair slightly rumpled and a splash of mud on his boots. If we turn to the first pages of the collected edition, we shall find our surmise confirmed. 'I became an author', he writes, 'quite by accident. I had never dreamt of such a thing. Some time in

1883, while pursuing in Lincoln's Inn, after a dimmish but not wholly unremunerative fashion, the now decayed profession of an equity draughtsman and conveyancer, it occurred to me'—that he might, perhaps, print certain manuscripts which had been read aloud in friendly coteries and put back in the desk. This he did, and the little book—it was the famous *Obiter Dicta*—had an instant and remarkable success. But though when he had found his way into print he never lost it again, he yet went on, as everybody knows, to pursue the law, to fight cases, to win seats, to sit in Parliament, to enter the Cabinet, to rule Ireland, and so to become, in course of time, the Right Honorable Augustine Birrell of varied and happy fame.

Thus the life of letters and the life of action were lived simultaneously, and there can be no doubt that the politician influenced the author, and that the author influenced the politician. With the politician we have no concern: it is the author only who comes within our scope. But it is plain that the author gained something of great value from his partnership with the man of affairs. In the first place he gained an unprofessional air, a holiday spirit. To sit down and write an essay was, it seemed, a treat that Mr. Birrell had promised himself, not a duty that had to be got through. A zest clings to the performance. He would have been, one feels, as much put out at missing a day's writing as most people are annoyed at losing a day's sport. But the advantage of the connection between the man of action and the man of letters goes deeper than that. The substance of Mr. Birrell's essays, the point of view that collects them and makes them, however disconnected in subject, of one spiritual texture, is the result of knowing the world and of passing judgement upon human life. It is the moral sense, not the

literary, that makes a unity of these scattered papers. We know, as we look back, what men Mr. Birrell has liked, rather than what books he has admired. And since the moral sense has gone abroad and taken the air, whether the sun shone or the rain poured, it is a healthy and active moral sense, genial and shrewd, without a trace of that sour and leathery constitution which afflicts the moral sense of those who live indoors passing judgement upon their fellows from the seclusion of a library. He has rubbed up with men and women in daily life; the incessant friction of affairs has kept him brisk; and when, therefore, he goes amongst the dead he goes with his sympathy and shrewdness as much on the alert as if he were meeting his friends at dinner, or had some point of business to settle with men of diverse character and pronounced opinion. There is not a trace of the pedagogue or of the dictator about him. And it is this elastic and humane quality that has kept his essays-some were written in the remote 'eighties-so much fresher than the mass of their contemporaries. For it is no uncommon experience to be pulled up in the middle of the brilliant and authoritative essay by a great Victorian—a Thackeray, a Carlyle, a Matthew Arnold-by some harsh and, as it seems to us, merely trivial and conventional judgement passed in a fit of the spleen upon the character or conduct of some great man. Thackeray's judgement upon Sterne, Carlyle's upon Lamb, Matthew Arnold's on Shelley, throw far more light upon the Victorian critics than upon their victims. We see in a flash how the critics of those days sat surrounded, for all their vigour, by keepsakes in dark rooms with draped mantelpieces; how much that we talk of openly was wrapped up in brown paper and hidden away behind plush curtains. But when we read Mr. Birrell it is

strange how seldom he speaks as an elder; how seldom we are reminded of Victorian prejudices and limitations. And this is due very largely to his robust powers of enjoyment. If there is one quality that alienates us more than another from the Victorians, it is their censorious habit of mind; their moral righteousness; their preference for pain to pleasure; for work to play. They had but to discover that Lamb drank, that Shelley was immoral, that Sterne, though a married man, was capable of flirting with a girl, and their hands fly up in dismay. We, they insinuate, could never have behaved like that. From this sin Mr. Birrell is free—astonishingly so, if we remember what we have already said, that his chief concern is with character and not with art. He summons up man after man, woman after woman, the big, the small, the wise, the foolish, and yet in passing judgement his voice never loses its cordiality, his temper is almost consistently unruffled. Even if, as will happen, a pretentious fool comes across him, he buffets his victim so genially across the stage that even that great goose, Hannah More herself, must have taken the process in good part. For this, again, credit must be given to politics. Life in the House of Commons, as Mr. Birrell says, makes it difficult to maintain aloofness, 'You hob-nob at luncheon, you grumble together over your dinner, you lament the spread of football clubs and brass bands in your constituencies.' And so, what with lunching here and dining there, it has been very difficult for Mr. Birrell to pull a long face over human failings, if at least they are such as proceed from good fellowship or hot-bloodedness, or a warm appreciation of the pleasures of life. It is the prigs and the censors and the timid water-drinkers whom he wholeheartedly despises, and he can be trusted to trounce them

much to our delectation whenever they raise their voices to deplore Lamb's drunkenness or the sinful extravagance of Sir Walter Scott.

Yet, to be honest, it is somewhere about this point that we become aware of divergence. We begin to catch now and again a note of irritation in his voice, to hear some echoes of the sonorous Victorian trumpet. His love of charity and good sense and good temper lead him on little by little to declaim not only against their opposites, but against those whom he takes to be their allies-speculation and introspection, and all those other vices of the new age which he fears will lead to the clouding of the clear stream of English literature and the paralysis of healthy human activity. Already, early in the 'eighties, he had scented the coming of change. He complained that 'The ruddy qualities of delightfulness, of pleasantness, are all "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought". The varied elements of life . . . seem to be fading from literature.' Indeed, even in the 'eighties things had come to such a pass that he was about to make up his mind 'to look for no more Sir Walters, no more Thackerays, no more Dickenses. The stories have all been told. Plots are exploded. Incident is over', when, miraculously, Treasure Island appeared, and the honour of English literature was saved.

Thus, for all his tolerance and catholicity, Mr. Birrell, it would appear, has his notion of what literature should be, and the fact that he eschews æsthetic criticism by no means implies that he has not a code of his own, and a will of his own, and a taste of his own, so that, though one seldom finds him splitting hairs, or sifting phrases, one does find as time goes on that there are whole tracts of literature, and we make bold to say, of very good literature at

that, which he very surprisingly and completely ignores. He has nothing to say about the great Russians or the great Frenchmen. His essays, though they embrace the years between 1880 and 1930, make no mention of Meredith or Henry James or Hardy or Conrad. For all he tells us to the contrary, one might suppose that English literature, in some terrific catastrophe, had fallen over a precipice about the year 1900, and lay in fragments not worth picking up and examining on the stones beneath. That, perhaps, is the disadvantage of treating books as if they might at any moment turn into people. One detects in them qualities that are distasteful to one in real lifegloom, self-analysis, morbidity, sexual aberration-and because such a character would nauseate one at a dinner party, one has nothing to say about a book, the fruit of a corrupt society and of an introspective temperament, called La Recherche du Temps Perdu. About this Mr. Birrell is perfectly plain spoken. 'We want Lambs,' he writes, 'not Coleridges. The verdict to be striven for is not "Well guessed" but "Well done".' And so with a great sweep of his arm he throws into the waste-paper basket such trifles as The Egoist, and The Wings of a Dove, The Return of the Native, The Possessed, and Lord Jim. That done, he heaves a sigh of relief and returns to the past; to his Borrow, his Lamb, and his Scott.

Thus we must accept the fact that Mr. Birrell will neither illumine the present nor acknowledge the future, save as a disagreeable necessity which it is the part of a wise man not to anticipate. But once that fact is faced—and it need not surprise us, seeing that a politician is in partnership with a writer—there still remain three fine volumes, and if another of autobiography could be added nothing would please us more, of witty, varied and most

entertaining criticism. Let us for a moment dwell upon the quality which kept our friend so unrepentantly out of bed —the charm, the seductiveness of Mr. Birrell's writing. It is just and right so to pause, for it is, perhaps by this quality rather than any other, that the books are destined to endure. Yet how are we to define the word that is so easily and sometimes so condescendingly pronounced? 'It is not easy to define charm which is not a catalogue of qualities but a mixture.' So Mr. Birrell says himself; and there is much in the saying that applies to him. Open Mr. Birrell where you will, and there is this mixture in operation; there is this blending of many often mutually destructive gifts in one effervescence—irony and feeling; sound sense and fantasy; caustic humour and sunny good temper. Hence the iridescence and sparkle and varied movement of his prose. It never forms into one smooth wave that comes crashing down upon our heads: it is for ever rippling and dancing, giving and withholding, like a breeze-stirred lake. And when this is said we have also said by implication that Mr. Birrell is a born writer—not one of our great writers, certainly not one of our professional writers, but one of those writers who spring as naturally from our literature as the dog-rose from the hedge, and scent it with as true a fragrance. How lightly and easily he casts the line of his sentence! How the images come flocking to his pen, and how pleasant and sometimes more than pleasant they are to the ear! 'So obviously genuine, so real, though so quiet, was his pleasure in our English lanes and dells,' he wrote of Matthew Arnold, 'that it is still difficult to realize that his feet can no longer stir the cowslips or his ear hear the cuckoo's parting cry'—but to underline what is so natural is to spoil it. And then beneath the wit and the sparkle there lies, not dormant by any means, but never

obtruded, something pungent as the smell of good tobacco and as pervasive—that profound love of books which some good critics have lacked, perhaps, but would be all the better critics for possessing. 'No man of letters knew letters better than he. He knew literature in all its branches—he had read books, he had written books, he had sold books, he had bought books, and he had borrowed them. He loved a catalogue; he delighted in an index. . . .' What Mr. Birrell says of Johnson we might say of Mr. Birrell. Everything about a book smells sweet in his nostrils, from the leather of the binding to the print upon the page.

So, then, if one seeks an excuse for reading Mr. Birrell and pleasure is still a little suspect—it is that he makes books seem lovable objects and reading an entrancing pursuit. Literature, when he writes of it, ceases to be an art and a mystery, and becomes instead a vast and varied assembly of all sorts of interesting people. Books turn into men and women, and men and women turn into books. There are Johnson and Scott, and George Eliot and Lamb; there are also Miss Hannah More and Arthur Young, and Arthur Young's little Bobbin. Some of the books are very rare and some of the people are very queer. There are many theological volumes among them and a good many lawyers. Then suddenly Mr. Browning or Mr. Matthew Arnold appears in the flesh, or 'Keep your eyes open,' says Mr. Birrell's father, 'for the author of the Wonder Book will pass us in a moment,' and behold, we see Hawthorne himself through the eyes of little Augustine Birrell in a street in Liverpool seventy years ago. Whether they are alive or dead, whether they are books or people, it is a splendid entertainment, call it what you will. To have created so varied a prospect, to have brought together out of the dimness so many shapes, the queer and

the hunchbacked as well as the stately and the splendid, to have led us up to the great writers in a mood of warmth and happy expectation yet critically too, and by no means ready to tolerate fustian or humbug—that is a great task to have accomplished. It tempts us, indeed, to take a liberty with one of Mr. Birrell's sentences without asking his permission. 'Even that most extraordinary compound, the rising generation of readers, whose taste in literature is as erratic as it is pronounced, read their Lamb', says Mr. Birrell, and here we interpose 'read their Birrell', and then go on in concert 'with laughter and with love'.

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## NOBODY LOVES

Last year, we had a little house up in the Swiss mountains, for the summer. A friend came to tea: a woman of fifty or so, with her daughter: old friends. 'And how are you all?' I asked, as she sat, flushed and rather exasperated after the climb up to the châlet on a hot afternoon, wiping her face with a too-small handkerchief. 'Well!' she replied, glancing almost viciously out of the window at the immutable slopes and peaks opposite, 'I don't know how you feel about it—but—these mountains!—well—I've lost all my cosmic consciousness, and all my love of humanity.'

She is, of course, New England of the old school—and usually transcendentalist calm. So that her exasperated frenzy of the moment—it was really a frenzy—coupled with the New England language and slight accent, seemed to me really funny. I laughed in her face, poor dear, and said: 'Never mind! Perhaps you can do with a rest from your cosmic consciousness and your love of humanity.'

I have often thought of it since: of what she really meant. And every time, I have had a little pang, realizing that I was a bit spiteful to her. I admit, her New England transcendental habit of loving the cosmos en bloc and humanity en masse did rather get on my nerves, always. But then she had been brought up that way. And the fact of loving the cosmos didn't prevent her from being fond of her own garden—though it did, a bit; and her love of humanity didn't prevent her from having a real

affection for her friends, except that she felt she ought to love them in a selfless and general way, which was rather annoving. Nevertheless, that, to me, rather silly language about cosmic consciousness and love of humanity did stand for something that was not merely cerebral. It stood, and I realized it afterwards, for her peace, her inward peace with the universe and with man. And this she could not do without. One may be at war with society, and still keep one's deep peace with mankind. It is not pleasant to be at war with society, but sometimes it is the only way of preserving one's peace of soul, which is peace with the living, struggling, real mankind. And this latter one cannot afford to lose. So I had no right to tell my friend she could do with a rest from her love of humanity. She couldn't, and none of us can: if we interpret love of humanity as that feeling of being at one with the struggling soul, or spirit, or whatever it is, of our fellow-men.

Now the wonder to me is that the young do seem to manage to get on without any 'cosmic consciousness' or 'love of humanity'. They have, on the whole, shed the cerebral husk of generalizations from their emotional state: the cosmic and humanity touch. But it seems to me they have also shed the flower that was inside the husk. Of course, you can hear a girl exclaim: 'Really, you know, the colliers are darlings, and it's a shame the way they're treated.' She will even rush off and register a vote for her darlings. But she doesn't really care—and one can sympathize with her. This caring about the wrongs of unseen people has been rather overdone. Nevertheless, though the colliers or cotton-workers, or whatever they be, are a long way off and we can't do anything about it, still, away in some depth of us, we know that we are connected vitally, if remotely, with these colliers or cotton-workers,

we dimly realize that mankind is one, almost one flesh. It is an abstraction, but it is also a physical fact. In some way or other, the cotton-workers of Carolina, or the rice-growers of China, are connected with me, and, to a faint yet real degree, part of me. The vibration of life which they give off reaches me, touches me, and affects me all unknown to me. For we are all more or less connected, all more or less in touch: all humanity. That is, until we have killed the sensitive responses in ourselves, which happens to-day only too often.

Dimly, this is what my transcendentalist meant by her 'love of humanity', though she tended to kill the real thing by labelling it so philanthropically and bossily. Dimly, she meant her sense of participating in the life of all humanity, which is a sense we all have, delicately and deeply, when we are at peace in ourselves. But let us lose our inward peace, and at once we are likely to substitute for this delicate inward sense of participating in the life of all mankind another thing, a nasty pronounced benevolence, which wants to do good to all mankind, and is only a form of self-assertion and of bullying. From this sort of love of humanity, good Lord deliver us! and deliver poor humanity. My friend was a tiny bit tainted with this form of self-importance, as all transcendentalists were. So if the mountains, in their brutality, took away the tainted love, good for them. But my dear Ruth-I shall call her Ruth—had more than this. She had, woman of fifty as she was, an almost girlish naive sense of living at peace, real peace, with her fellow-men. And this she could not afford to lose. And save for that taint of generalization and will, she would never have lost it, even for that half-hour in the Swiss mountains. But she meant the 'cosmos' and 'humanity' to fit her will and her feelings,

and the mountains made her realize that the cosmos wouldn't. When you come up against the cosmos, your consciousness is likely to suffer a jolt. And humanity, when you come down to it, is likely to give your 'love' a

nasty jar. But there you are.

When we come to the younger generation, however, we realize that 'cosmic consciousness' and 'love of humanity' have really been left out of their composition. They are like a lot of brightly-coloured bits of glass, and they only feel just what they bump against, when they're shaken. They make an accidental pattern with other people, and for the rest they know nothing and care

nothing.

So that cosmic consciousness and love of humanity, to use the absurd New England terms, are really dead. They were tainted. Both the cosmos and humanity were too much manufactured in New England. They weren't the real thing. They were, very often, just noble phrases to cover up self-assertion, self-importance, and malevolent bullying. They were just activities of the ugly, self-willed ego, determined that humanity and the cosmos should exist as New England allowed them to exist, or not at all. They were tainted with bullying egoism, and the young, having fine noses for this sort of smell, would have none of them.

The way to kill any feeling is to insist on it, harp on it, exaggerate it. Insist on loving humanity, and sure as fate you'll come to hate everybody. Because, of course, if you insist on loving humanity, then you insist that it shall be lovable: which half the time it isn't. In the same way, insist on loving your husband, and you won't be able to help hating him secretly. Because of course nobody is always lovable. If you insist they shall be, this imposes a

tyranny over them, and they become less lovable. And if you force yourself to love them—or pretend to—when they are not lovable, you falsify everything, and fall into hate. The result of forcing any feeling is the death of that feeling, and the substitution of some sort of opposite. Whitman insisted on sympathizing with everything and everybody: so much so, that he came to believe in death only, not just his own death, but the death of all people. In the same way the slogan *Keep Smiling!* produces at last a sort of savage rage in the breast of the smilers, and the famous 'cheery morning greeting' makes the gall accumulate in all the cheery ones.

It is no good. Every time you force your feelings, you damage yourself and produce the opposite effect to the one you want. Try to force yourself to love somebody, and you are bound to end by detesting that same somebody. The only thing to do is to have the feelings you've really got, and not make up any of them. And that is the only way to leave the other person free. If you feel like murdering your husband, then don't say: 'Oh, but I love him dearly. I'm devoted to him.' That is not only bullying yourself, but bullying him. He doesn't want to be forced, even by love. Just say to yourself: 'I could murder him, and that's a fact. But I suppose I'd better not.' And then your feelings will get their own balance.

The same is true of love of humanity. The last generation, and the one before that, insisted on loving humanity. They cared terribly for the poor suffering Irish and Armenians, and Congo Rubber negroes, and all that. And it was a great deal of it fake, self-conceit, self-importance. The bottom of it was the egoistic thought: 'I'm so good, I'm so superior, I'm so benevolent, I care intensely about the poor suffering Irish and the martyred Armenians and

the oppressed negroes, and I'm going to save them, even if I have to upset the English, and the Turks, and the Belgians severely.' This love of mankind was half self-importance and half a desire to interfere and put a spoke in other people's wheels. The younger generation, smelling the rat under the lamb's-wool of Christian Charity, said to themselves: 'No love of humanity for me!'.

They have, if the truth be told, a secret detestation of all oppressed or unhappy people who need 'relief'. They rather hate 'the poor colliers', 'the poor cotton-workers', 'the poor starving Russians', and all that. If there came another war, how they would loathe 'the stricken Belgians'! And so it is: the father cats the pear, and the son's teeth are set on edge.

Having overdone the sympathy touch, especially the love of humanity, we have now got the recoil away from sympathy. The young don't sympathize, and they don't want to. They are egoists, and frankly so. They say quite honestly: 'I don't give a hoot in hell for the poor oppressed this-that-and-the-other'. And who can blame them? Their loving forbears brought on the Great War. If love of humanity brought on the Great War, let us see what frank and honest egoism will do. Nothing so horrible, we can bet.

The trouble about frank and accepted egoism is its unpleasant effect on the egoist himself. Honesty is very good, and it is good to cast off all the spurious sympathies and false emotions of the pre-war world. But casting off spurious sympathy and false emotion need not entail the death of all sympathy and all deep emotion, as it seems to do in the young. The young quite deliberately play at sympathy and emotion. 'Darling child, how lovely you look to-night! I adore to look at you!'—and in the next

breath, a little arrow of spite. Or the young wife to her husband: 'My beautiful love, I feel so precious when you hold me like that, my perfect dear! But shake me a cocktail, angel, would you? I need a good kick—you angel of light!'

The young, at the moment, have a perfectly good time strumming on the keyboard of emotion and sympathy, tinkling away at all the exaggerated phrases of rapture and tenderness, adoration and delight, while they feel—nothing, except a certain amusement at the childish game. It is so *chic* and charming to use all the most precious phrases of love and endearment amusingly, just amusingly, like the tinkling in a music-box.

And they would be very indignant if told they had no love of humanity. The English ones profess the most amusing and histrionic love of England, for example: 'There is only one thing I care about, except my beloved Philip, and that is England, our precious England. Philip and I are both prepared to die for England, at any moment.' At the moment, England does not seem to be in any danger of asking them, so they are quite safe. And if you gently inquire: 'But what, in your imagination, is England?' they reply fervently, 'The great tradition of the English, the great idea of England'—which seems comfortably elastic and non-committal.

And they cry: 'I would give anything for the cause of freedom. Hope and I have wept tears, and saddened our precious marriage-bed, thinking of the trespass on English liberty. But we are calmer now, and determined to fight calmly to the utmost'. Which calm fight consists in taking another cocktail and sending out a wildly emotional letter to somebody perfectly irresponsible. Then all is over, and freedom is forgotten, and perhaps religion

gets a turn, or a wild outburst over some phrase in the Burial Service.

This is the advanced young of to-day. I confess it is amusing, while the coruscation lasts. The trying part is when the fireworks have finished—and they don't last very long, even with cocktails—and the grey stretches intervene. For, with the advanced young there is no warm daytime and silent night. It is all fireworks of excitement and stretches of grey emptiness; then more fireworks. And, let the grisly truth be owned, it is rather exhausting.

Now, in the grey intervals in the life of the modern young, one fact emerges in all its dreariness, and makes itself plain to the young themselves, as well as to the onlooker. The fact that they are empty: that they care about nothing and nobody: not even the amusement they seek so strenuously. Of course, this skeleton is not to be taken out of the cupboard. 'Darling angel man, don't start being a nasty white ant. Play the game, angel-face, play the game; don't start saying unpleasant things and rattling a lot of dead men's bones! Tell us something nice, something amusing. Or let's be really serious, you know, and talk about bolshevism or la haute finance. Do be an angel of light, and cheer us up, you nicest precious pet!'

As a matter of fact, the young are becoming afraid of their own emptiness. It's awful fun throwing things out of the window. But when you've thrown everything out, and you've spent two or three days sitting on the bare floor and sleeping on the bare floor and eating off the bare floor, your bones begin to ache, and you begin to wish for some of the old furniture back, even if it was the ugliest Victorian horsehair.

At least, that's how it seems to me the young women begin to feel. They are frightened at the emptiness of their house of life, now they've thrown everything out of the window. Their young Philips and Peters, and so on, don't seem to make the slightest move to put any new furniture in the house of the young generation. The only new piece they introduce is a cocktail-shaker, and perhaps a wireless set. For the rest, it can stay blank.

And the young women begin to feel a little uneasv. Women don't like to feel empty. A woman hates to feel that she believes in nothing and stands for nothing. Let her be the silliest woman on earth, she will take something seriously: her appearance, her clothes, her house, something. And let her be not so very silly, and she wants more than that. She wants to feel, instinctively, that she amounts to something, and that her life stands for something. Women, who so often are angry with men because men cannot 'just live', but must always be wanting some purpose in life, are themselves, perhaps, the very root of the male necessity for a purpose in life. It seems to me that in a woman the need to feel that her life means something, stands for something, and amounts to something, is much more imperative than in a man. The woman herself may deny it emphatically; because, of course, it is the man's business to supply her life with this 'purpose'. But a man can be a tramp, purposeless, and be happy. Not so a woman. It is a very, very rare woman who can be happy if she feels herself 'outside' the great purpose of life. Whereas, I verily believe, vast numbers of men would gladly drift away as wasters, if there were anywhere to drift to.

A woman cannot bear to feel empty and purposeless. But a man may take a real pleasure in that feeling. A man can take a real pride and satisfaction in pure negation: 'I am quite empty of feeling, I don't care the slightest bit in the world for anybody or anything except myself. But I

do care for myself, and I'm going to survive in spite of them all, and I'm going to have my own success without caring the least in the world how I get it. Because I'm cleverer than they are, I'm cunninger than they are, even if I'm weak. I must build myself proper protections, and entrench myself, and then I'm safe. I can sit inside my glass tower and feel nothing and be touched by nothing, and yet exert my power, my will, through the glass walls of my ego.'

That, roughly, is the condition of a man who accepts the condition of true egoism, and emptiness, in himself. He has a certain pride in the condition, since in pure emptiness of real feeling he can still carry out his ambition, his will to egoistic success.

Now I doubt if any woman can feel like this. The most egoistic woman is always in a tangle of hate, if not of love. But the true male egoist neither hates nor loves. He is quite empty, at the middle of him. Only on the surface he has feelings: and these he is always trying to get away from. Inwardly, he feels nothing. And when he feels nothing, he exults in his ego and knows he is safe. Safe, within his fortifications, inside his glass tower.

But I doubt if women can even understand this condition in a man. They mistake the emptiness for depth. They think the false calm of the egoist who really feels nothing, is strength. And they imagine that all the defences which the confirmed egoist throws up, the glass tower of imperviousness, are screens to a real man, a positive being. And they throw themselves madly on the defences, to tear them down and come at the real man, little knowing that there is no real man, the defences are only there to protect a hollow emptiness, an egoism, not a human man.

But the young are beginning to suspect. The young women are beginning to respect the defences, for they are more afraid of coming upon the ultimate nothingness of the egoist, than of leaving him undiscovered. Hollowness, nothingness—it frightens the woman. They cannot be real nihilists. But men can. Men can have a savage satisfaction in the annihilation of all feeling and all connection, in a resultant state of sheer negative emptiness, when there is nothing left to throw out of the window, and the window is sealed.

Women wanted freedom. The result is a hollowness, an emptiness which frightens the stoutest heart. Women then turn to women for love. But that doesn't last. It can't. Whereas the emptiness persists and persists.

The love of humanity is gone, leaving a great gap. The cosmic consciousness has collapsed upon a great void. The egoist sits grinning furtively in the triumph of his own emptiness. And now what is woman going to do? Now that the house of life is empty, now that she's thrown all the emotional furnishing out of the window, and the house of life, which is her eternal home, is empty as a tomb, now what is dear forlorn woman going to do?

## **TANTRUMS**

The Life of Tolstoy. In two volumes. By Aylmer Maude.

What is Art? and Essays on Art, by Leo Tolstoy. Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. (Oxford University Press, and Humphrey Milford.) This, the eighteenth volume of the complete Tolstoy, contains eight short essays besides the main treatise, and two of them in particular ought to be read before it. These are the Introduction to Maupassant, a piece showing better than any other how Tolstoy's æsthetic works in a favourable concrete case. The other is the draft essay On Art, a preliminary version, but more closely reasoned and with fewer divagations than What is Art? Again it works: anyone who will apply the calculus of Significance, Lucidity, and Sincerity as Tolstoy expounds it will find, I think, that he has acquired a new and fruitful mode of approach. The great treatise itself is of the prophetic rather than the philosophic order, like the later work of Ruskin, and like Ruskin, too, Tolstoy was always falling from prophecy into tantrums. Lëva-Rëva, Crybaby, they called him when he was little, and from the biography it is clear that his tears, even in childhood, never flowed more freely than when his exquisitely balanced sensibilities were touched by ugliness or beauty. Before he was five he remembered 'how Theodore Ivanich jumped, lifting his legs too loudly and noisily, and I felt this was wrong and depraved, and began to cry'. Such a temperament is likely to take one of two courses: to give itself wholly to beauty or to set its teeth, shut its eyes, and pretend that beauty does not matter.

Formally, Tolstoy's theory of art is constructed to exclude all reference to beauty; his definition comes very near to Wordsworth's emotion recollected in tranquillity, but Tolstoy would add in widest commonalty spread. And here, try as he may to fix his position by social and ethical considerations, the æsthetic demand carries him away. For one of the emotions which may be communicated is admiration for a beautiful arabesque. The dyke has sprung a leak: if an arabesque, why not a cadence, a line, a phrase? There are passages again which might be quoted to show that in Tolstoy's view a fetching headline, Mother Broadcasts to Missing Airmen, was a work of art; it is lucid, significant, and sincere, and conveys a universal emotion. Yet no one has ever laid more stress on importance of form or the minuteness of the shades which make a thing a work of art, or leave it a mere statement. Literature he understood and respected. The Life is evidence of the vigilance, the care and industry with which he read and wrote. 'Trollope kills me with his mastery'—this sentence in his diary is enough to reveal in what spirit he took his work. But away from literature he was never anything but an amateur. Mr. Maude's Life is in many ways a singularly happy performance. A biography is good in proportion as it resembles Boswell, and Tolstoy wrote and talked about himself so much that he is not difficult to Boswellize. His biographer, moreover, stands at the right distance, once a disciple, still an admirer, but even in the days of his discipleship, always with an eye open to the weak places in the master's spiritual outfit. The figure that strides and moans through his pages is, with all its comic inconsistencies, solid. An artist, with sensibilities that might have shattered a constitution less robust; a craftsman of infinite patience and industry; and behind

them both, an idle rich man, lecherous and cruel, mooning and bellowing about the beauty of work, poverty, chastity, and kindness; as helpless, as imperious, as selfish as a baby; ready to smash anything and anyone, if only he could sprawl unconfined, close to the wet and savoury earth, dressing up, playing Robinson Crusoe in a vast world of make-believe, where he was legislator, prophet, and king, but always within hearing of the dinner-bell. This was the Tolstoy that his wife knew only too well. The Tolstoy that she could not understand—very few women can-was the adolescent who had not grown up. The fierce asceticism, the conflicts and horrors of sex and religion, the portentous amateurishness of Tolstoy's morality, belong to boyhood. Whenever he writes on Art, we have to discount the adolescent's passionate resistance to the senses and their appeal—and to remember that when Tolstoy was nearing sixty he had to hurry back from the South of Russia to his wife because he could not keep off the girls. But strike out all this, strike out all that is merely topical, like the attack on the Symbolists, or merely fractious, like the tirades against the upper classes and the critics, and what remains is a profound diagnosis of the trouble of our age. If Art is a good thing in life, why do so few people care anything about it? If it is bad, why do so many people waste their time over it? Tolstoy's answer, that it has become the idiom of a class which they employ to communicate with each other, having nothing to say of any interest to those beyond, is not the whole truth, but it is a truth, and one which it is good to keep in the mind.

As the author of this excellent translation invites corrections, I offer two: Tact of the music should be beat, and pro captu lectoris has nothing to do with the reader's head.

# READERS' REPORTS

Messrs. Bell have sent me the Annual Bulletin of Historical Literature for 1928, published for the Historical Association. It is in seven sections, each compiled by an expert scholar, and having had some experience of the difficulties of characterizing a book neatly in a line or two, I am able to admire the skill with which over six hundred books are weighed, placed, and labelled, in less than sixty pages. Such a guide is valuable even to the specialist: to the serious general reader, who wishes to be directed, without waste of time, to the latest books, it is indispensable.

In the same series I have read with interest Dr. Temperley's paper on Foreign Historical Fiction with a classified list, which ignores neither Jew Süss nor The Dove in the Eagle's Nest. I should be glad if this note helps to give a wider circulation to the admirable work produced by the Historical Association, the address of which is 22 Russell Square, W.C.I.—EDITOR.

A Generation Missing, by Carroll Carstairs. To those who took part in the Great War in any capacity the element of time seemed peculiar. Mr. Carstairs in this book says: 'Time, like a clock run down, drags on pulseless', and speaks of the 'clock-work passage of time', and the curious thing is that although some days went by like years, years seemed to pass in an hour. For instance, the retreat from Mons, though it lasted only a fortnight, seemed like an epoch, whereas 1917 succeeded 1916 as quickly as one evening succeeds another. Most war-books omit this factor. They consist of a series of dramatic close-ups. But Mr. Carstairs in this book is successful in rendering the

crazy kind of slow-motion and spasmodic speed. What strikes one about any first-hand document which treats of the war-a diary, letters-is that the impression is kaleidoscopic, haphazard. Every individual found himself at a given moment doing what the wildest guess could not have anticipated. This book—a rare quality in war fiction—gives that effect: and the explanation of this artistic achievement is perhaps that the mind on which these wild, whirling and haphazard events were imprinted is sensitive, thoughtful, and wistful. The author's emotions were shaken by circumstance as dice are in a box, but he at once achieved the necessary detachment: 'One must accept these things,' he writes in a purely matter-of-fact way, 'one must accept everything as happening outside of oneself, like a cab running over someone else; there can be no relation between cause and effect.

The author is an American. He joined on the first day of the War an improvised British camp of Scouts and Guides, but he was sent back when he reached Southampton because he knew no German. A month later he claimed Canadian birth at the War Office and received a commission in the Royal Field Artillery. He remains with a battery until the Autumn, when one day in the Ypres Salient he reads in the Gazette that he has been transferred to the Grenadier Guards. The scene shifts to Chelsea Barracks, with a glimpse of London night-life during the war, and fleeting love-affairs. The following September he is back and in the thick of the battle of the Somme. The horror and hellishness of war is faced without hysteria and without extenuation. The author neither exaggerates nor bowdlerizes. Describing the burial parties in Trones Wood he says: 'The stench and

appearance of the dead is such that the young soldiers are sick.' He falls sick himself and is evacuated to England, and his experiences alternate afterwards between those of the hospital, leave in England and France, and of fighting until the end of the war, when he is severely wounded a few days before the armistice.

The salient quality of the book is that it is the record of the war as fought by the Grenadier Guards, seen from the angle of an American and of a naturally detached and sensitive personality. What strikes him most forcibly is the combination of inflexible discipline on duty and unlimited friendliness and camaraderic off duty. Friendliness was never allowed to interfere with duty, and duty never encroached on friendliness. The book is full of vivid vignettes. For instance: 'On our way up to the line, Wonnacott (a sergeant-major) had made an astonishing observation. "That man bobs," he had said. "Bobs?" I had repeated, not understanding and visualizing a dip to royalty. "Yes, bobs," insisted Wonnacot. "That man ducks under shell-fire."

The book is the reflection of a thoughtful personality. He is thoughtful because he knows how to laugh, and gay because he knows how to feel and to muse, one who faces all that war—that supper of horrors—has to offer without shrinking, and who is able to appreciate what there is to appreciate, and to enjoy such fugitive scraps of enjoyment as are flung at him. There is a quiet note and a restrained tempo in the book. What is horrible is quietly told. There is a sense, too, of continuity: of the endlessness of the 'long, long way'; a transmission, not only the passage of time, crazy and out of joint like that of an irresponsible cuckoo clock, but also of the march of characters across the stage: the perpetual stream of

new-comers arriving, arriving and departing and joining the ever-increasing army of ghosts, until you are convinced that a whole generation has indeed passed before your eyes and is now missing. Some of those who lasted longest and whose staying-power was most stubborn go at last, and even 'Poor Sergeant Wonnacott failed to "bob" once too often and a shell blew the back of his head off'. Such men have found a fitting record of their deeds in Mr. Carstairs's book.

Life and Letters of Henry Arthur Jones, by Doris Arthur Jones. (Gollancz. 25s.) This book is a biography and a lively one. It is not a study of the dramatist's work. There are good letters in it. Henry Arthur Jones wrote eightythree plays, of which twenty-four seem to have never been produced and some never printed. Of his performed plays only three were revived more than once on the English stage: The Silver King (1882), one of the most popular and often-repeated of melodramas; The Case of Rebellious Susan (1894); and The Liars (1897), which was revived in 1900 and again in 1904, 1907, 1910, 1915 and 1917. Thus only a small part of his work proved interesting after its first appearance. Yet Henry Arthur Jones must be reckoned as one of the successful playwrights of his day, and in a sense among the most important of them. His work, even more than that of Sir Arthur Pinero, bridged the transition from Victorian to post-Ibsen drama. He was the hope of critics bent on infusing seriousness and vigour to contemporary drama. Yet important as his work was, it was not the kind which lasts. The proportion of ephemeral work in the case of dramatists seems higher than in the case of novelists of equal relative standing. It looks as though it is only one or two

of their plays that people want to see again, even during the next ten or twenty years following performance. Literary merit seems essential if a play is to become part of the national repertory. All those which form part of that repertory, the Elizabethan plays, the plays of Congreve, Goldsmith, Sheridan, Oscar Wilde, possess it. Now those of Henry Arthur Jones have no literary merit beyond an adequate straightforward animation. This, then, is the life of a man whose work, important when it was written, has ceased to be of significance. Our pleasure in reading his life, therefore, is that of being transported back again into the theatre of the nineteenth century, for though 'Henry Arthur' continued to have successes during the first decade of the twentieth century, he had by then shot his bolt. We also enjoy following the hopes and disappointments, the enthusiasms indignant and sympathetic, of a hot-tempered, warm-hearted, honest man. The tiffs and shindies which accompanied his career, both with his interpreters and those friends who differed from him on politics and morals, make lively reading.

When the War broke out it was natural that a man of his temperament should go wild with patriotism. What kept him before the public more than his dramas during the War and afterwards, were his tirades against Wells and Shaw. He excelled in denunciation, but his blows were not always well directed. What is noteworthy is that those he attacked did not cease to feel a warm admiration for him. He was such a genuine, generous man. There was only one point on which he was sore, although his railings made some people think him embittered, namely, that some of his best work, *Michael and his lost Angel*, for example, had never been appreciated. On the whole, he



regarded himself as a man whose efforts had been abundantly recognized and amply rewarded. He did his utmost to persuade the public of the importance of the theatre, and to make them study modern plays more diligently. The correspondence in this book, the letters from 'Max', Shaw and others, contribute greatly to its interest and vivacity.

The Trial of George Chapman, edited by Hargrave L. Adam. (Hodge. 10s. 6d.) This is the latest addition to the Notable British Trials Series. The introduction is long. The trial has less dramatic interest than usual. There was no doubt about Chapman's guilt (his real name was Klosowski), and the trial itself is chiefly remarkable for Mr. Justice Grantham's summing-up having been a powerful speech for the prosecution. Chapman was hanged for poisoning Maud Eliza Marsh, a woman who lived with him and acted as his barmaid at the Monument public-house in Borough High Street. It was discovered that he had also poisoned with the same poison, antimony, two other women, Mary Spink and Bessie Taylor, who had previously stood in the same relation to him. Neither cupidity nor sexual morbidity seems to have been the motive of his crimes, but a desire for change and to rid himself of a particular woman. Some have supposed that George Chapman was Jack the Ripper. The dates of the 'Ripper Murders' coincide with Chapman's presence in London and his absences from it, and the 'Ripper' crimes in America happened during his visit to that country. These coincidences are not sufficient to justify that supposition.

These now famous Series of Trials are far better reading than the studies in sordid realism with which painful novelists provide us. As Mr. Leonard Woolf said, reading one of them is like seeing the whole front of a house opened like a doll's house, so that we can see what is going on simultaneously on every floor. Moreover, such records often provide a trait or phrase more revealing than the inventive divinations of the most thorough realistic novelist. The pleasure one gets from such reading is not an exalted one, and it is one which often leaves a slight nausea behind; but curiosity about the baser side of human nature is legitimate, and this series offers the best opportunities of satisfying it. We get our realism neat, not mixed with the gusto and guess-work of talent—a great advantage.

### BRITISH AND AMERICAN JUSTICE

Mr. Sydney Fowler is not merely a detective novelist. He has a thesis which, in The King Against Anne Bickerton (Harrap. 7s. 6d.), he is concerned to expound. This thesis is that English justice, and still more English legal tradition, is less concerned to discover the truth about any particular crime than to see that the person whom the police have decided to be guilty (upon reasonable evidence, of course) shall not escape without very good reason given. 'There had been two or three instances where he [the judge] had been convinced of the innocence of a prisoner, and had been firm and decisive in cutting short the case, and directing the jury to return a verdict of not guilty. He had acted as a poultry-keeper would do who observed that one of his hens was being pecked through having got, by some unlikely accident, into the wrong pen. He fetched it out at once. But, as a rule, he relied on the assumption that the dock was the place for criminals, and he relied upon the police to see

that a selected criminal filled it as surely as that his manservant would put tea, and not cocoa or coffee, into his morning teapot.'

This being so, the reader must not expect to find a great deal of detection in his book. We know, almost from the start, that Anne Bickerton is innocent, and that this will eventually be proved; and the manner of its proving, though ingenious and adequate, receives little space or stress. But this does not prevent Mr. Fowler's having written an excellent novel, and one which, moreover, writers of 'pure' detective novels might well study with a view to getting hints for character-drawing. For one thing, Mr. Fowler has drawn attention to the Great Witness Fallacy, into which nearly every detective writer falls. It is almost invariably assumed, you will find, that when a witness makes a statement to the police on an important matter, that witness is either speaking the truth or deliberately lying. Nobody seems to think that the witness may be remembering all wrong, or constitutionally incapable of saying he doesn't know, or has forgotten; and yet anybody who has ever tried to get at the truth of, say, a squabble between the cook and the housemaid, knows that most statements are not either the truth or deliberate lies, but simply inaccurate. Mr. Fowler's heroine nearly hangs herself by sheer inaccuracy on an important point, and her brother, with profound psychology, remarks that no one would have expected anything else. Further, Mr. Fowler has succeeded in drawing a character as common in fact as it is rare in fiction—the completely virtuous and maddeningly inefficient female. Everybody possesses aunts, or sisters, or cousins, or even mothers, who do their duty at all points, and do it all wrong, who forget their purses and lose their tickets,

whose conversation is at once banal and endless, whose hearts are kind and whose heads hopeless, but who yet are in no sense caricatures.

"I might tell you," 's says Anne Bickerton's defending counsel when he has got her off, "The Adventure of the Home Secretary who Wasn't There, and some one else might tell you The Adventure of the Burst Tyre, or The Adventure of the Permanent Official who didn't Want to be Told too Much..." '. (This is novel-dialogue.)

"I wonder what they're going to do to that wicked boy?" Miss Bickerton interrupted. She had no intention of rudeness, but the kind of conversation in which Mr. Salmon indulged had no meaning for her.' (This is life.)

Mr. Fowler's book is very well worth reading, by the Ordinary Reader as well as the Detective Fan. I do not think his case against the Law is fully proved; but it is admirably argued, and is only unfair at one point.

In the United States, however, such a case could never be made out, for it would never enter anyone's head to state it. In The Bowery Murder, by Willard K. Smith (Collins. Crime Club. 7s. 6d.), which purports to be an accurate re-telling of a New York shooting-case in newspaper reports, the District Attorney is hanging about the Bowery drive, where the wicked financier was killed; and he first tries to suppress the case altogether, and then enters into a long Press wrangle with the chief of police. And nobody appears in the least surprised. Everybody lies, of set purpose, a great number of times, and in different ways; there are four confessions, all untrue; the truth is discovered almost by accident; and numbers of wellknown people all appear to spend their time in East Side dope and gambling hells. In Miss M. G. Eberhart's book. While the Patient Slept (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.), the police roar

and bully for pages, but find out nothing at all; in Miss Kay Strachan's Death Traps (Gollancz. 7s. 6d.) they hardly appear at all, and the public interest is represented by what I believe is called the 'tabloid press'; in Mr. Van Dine's latest work, The Scarab Murder Case (Cassell. 7s. 6d.), they sit meekly at the feet of the detective while he declines to give them any information whatever. Mr. Van Dine's technique, it is true, can be paralleled from English novelists, and I do not put it forward as an example of American police methods. Nevertheless, a strange country.

Mr. Smith's book is the best of the four, provided that the reader can endure infinite slabs of New York journalese. Mr. Smith knows what he is talking aboutat least, as far as I am any judge; his portraits of various types of the New York underworld (or is it upperworld?) are firmly drawn and highly coloured; and his story is exciting. But his book is rather long and inclined to drag a little; and the method of sandwiching long extracts from the 'tabloid press' with rather over-allusive 'Notes by the Compiler' may, as I say, weary the short-winded reader. Miss Eberhart is very violent; the people who lived in the house where the patient slept were more like the people who lived in the House of Usher than ordinary human objects: they stole, fought and screamed upon the slightest provocation, and the only way to guess the murderer is to go nap on the least likely. Considered as a shocker, however, it is not at all bad; and the nurse who tells the story is a good character.

Miss Kay Strachan has become so psychological as to be nearly unintelligible. *Death Traps* is composed almost entirely of long and complicated conversations. I hardly noticed myself when the problem of the murder was solved, and the characters in the book instantly agreed to forget it. This novel is a disappointment after Footprints: no murder in the world is worth such abysses of talk. Mr. Van Dine, on this occasion, is interested in Egyptology. There are twenty-four learned Egyptian footnotes in his novel; the text itself abounds in bright little sentences, such as, 'the u transliteratives of Budgethe quail chicks—are recorded as a w in Gardiner. And, of course, there's the cursive plural sign, which is also the hieroglyphic adaptation of the hieratic abbreviated form of the quail'; and Philo Vance, the detective, at intervals gives short Extension Lecturettes to the police upon various cultural subjects. Meanwhile, he forbids them to make any arrests until his plans are complete, as a result of which an innocent man is shut in a stone sarcophagus and nearly perishes; but the police do not complain. Mr. Van Dine beats me. I find his novels improbable, irritating, and pedantic, and more improbable and more pedantic as time goes on. But he is an American best seller, and he has been made into at least one talkie, so some people must like this sort of thing. If this is the sort of thing that they like, The Scarab Murder Case is even more so than usual.

Let us return to England, and to three perfectly straightforward books. The Two Tickets Puzzle (Gollancz. 75. 6d.) is a good Connington. It comes to business with the minimum of fuss and frills; it is very tidily worked out; the secret is adequately kept till the last; and there is a chase in motor-cars (Mr. Connington likes to chase criminals in motor-cars) to provide a little final excitement. Mr. Connington's economy is one of his strongest points, and it recommends his books rather to those who like their puzzles pure than to those who demand colour and character. If that is understood in advance, The Two

Tickets Puzzle may safely be recommended as a very competent piece of writing. Mr. Richard Keverne's merits and demerits are exactly the opposite of Mr. Connington's; he has a very pleasant sense of character and atmosphere, but his plots are his weak point. It is not that they are incredible, like so many people's; but they are rather dull, and they tend to drag. This was not the case in William Cook, which remains his best book; but it is the case with The Man in the Red Hat (Constable. 7s. 6d.). For about two-thirds of its length this book is readable and interesting; then the plot begins to flounder, and the reader, gradually awakening to the fact that nothing particular is going to happen, begins to yawn. And why does Mr. Keverne make his criminals such blunderers? Nevertheless, this book is superior to most of its class.

Last comes Mr. Philip Macdonald's much-advertised The Noose (Collins. Crime Club. 7s. 6d.). This is a great improvement on Mr. Macdonald's last book; Anthony Gethryn, his detective, is less intense and less annoying than before, and the plot is exciting if not very plausible. The writing is still rather highfalutin in places, and I am getting tired of detectives who catch their murderers by standing, apparently unprotected, in a wide open field, and inviting the murderer to come and commit another murder. But it is distinctly worth reading. The noose (if it is a noose) on the dust-cover resembles a skipping-rope.

Spring has come. This batch, taken on the average, is better than any which has appeared since Christmas.

Of Reading Books, by John Livingston Lowes. (Constable. 5s.) We welcome cordially this new book by the Professor of English at Harvard, whose preceding volumes, The Road

to Xanadu and Convention and Revolt in Poetry, have already won him a hearing from all who value sound and original criticism clothed in a style remarkably felicitous and grave. Here, in fact, are a mind and voice which seem to have caught their delicate appreciations and musical expression from an earlier and less-hurrying age. Mr. Lowes gives us four essays, on 'The Pilgrim's Progress', on 'The Noblest Monument of English Prose', on 'Two Readings of Earth', and on 'Reading Books'. The 'noblest monument' is the Jacobean Version of the Bible, the 'two readings of earth' come from Meredith and Hardy. Now, to begin with, it is a real refreshment to find a mind at once so scholarly and so human fairly revelling in Bunyan's masterpiece, and avoiding such poor criticism as that Christian callously abandoned his wife and children, which only shows that those who make it have not appreciated what allegory in its perfection means, and also have not read the conversation in the House Beautiful. Moreover, Mr. Lowes seems to set the second part in high place. It is fully time that this were done. Too often, the critic makes the trite sneer that this is only one of many examples of the failure of a sequel to come up to its predecessor. As a fact, the second part, while lacking some of the rough strength of the first, makes up by showing us a mellowed Bunyan, rich in experience, warm in charity, and sometimes giving us passages of such sustained sweetness and charm that the English language cannot provide better fare. We admire the masterly contrast between Spenser's great allegory, in which we are perpetually perplexed by 'the maddening interplay of telescoping personalities', so that we never know whether we are dealing with a character or a quality, and Bunyan's firmer grasp that an allegoric personage must be

human through and through. And what is finer than the appreciation of Christian himself, and, incidentally, of the way by which he grips us all—'no angelic being', but 'a faulty, blundering, struggling mortal—despairing, yet doggedly pressing on; afraid, yet fighting like a lion; forgetful, inattentive, easily deceived, retracing painfully false steps-and then, once more, face forward to the goal'? Mr. Lowes calls attention to the way in which Bunyan uses the scenes and circumstances of his countryside, like a very Defoe, to add reality to his descriptions. We miss only two. One is the fact that, before the Civil Wars, there must still have stood, even if defaced, many a wayside cross or crucifix; the other is the problem of the House Beautiful. Several guesses have been made as to Bunyan's inspiration: one is, for some reason, always passed by. Yet it is obvious. Bunyan went about as a boy, with his father, a travelling tinker; and within a few miles of Elstow there stood the marvellous House of Little Gidding, whose fame was talked about by friend and foe for thirty years of its cloistered, yet hospitable, life. The ladies, with symbolical names, the virginals, the hymn-singing, day and night, the catechizing, the dispensary—all were there, and must have been the gossip of the whole neighbourhood. Bunyan's boyhood, too, was of a churchly type. Well; there is the suggestion, for what it is worth.

The style of the essay on the Jacobean Version is in tune with its subject, and there is valuable suggestiveness in the thought that the Hebrew of the original, and the English of the Elizabethans, met delightfully in the fact that each language made use of spiritual concepts which had had a primary physical significance. Then English possessed two components—the homely vigour of the

Saxon tongue, joined to the magnificent sonorousness of medieval Church Latin. We are only surprised that Mr. Lowes omits what cries for comment—that the Authorized Version is the solitary instance of a classic compiled by a committee.

There are light and wind for Mr. Lowes in Meredith's earth-vision, but we fancy that his real response is to 'the hundred poems that probe to the quick' from the 'intimate, personal' touch and tang of earth that is Hardy's, and he gives the mighty Dynasts its meed. We are sure of Egdon Heath and of the Retreat from Moscow, with its first falling snowflake, as we are not sure of The Woods of Westermain, nor even of the entrancing, but not quite tranced, Love in a Valley. Meredith takes long walks, sure to be home at nightfall; Hardy's is the tramp of life, with,

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perhaps, a deserted inn at the end to look forward to. Finally, our thanks for the human and humorous paper on the reading of books. And not least for the held-out lure of serendipity in its last paragraph. The word is not mentioned, but that is the thing which is meant.

Sixteen Letters from Oscar Wilde. Edited and with notes by John Rothenstein. (Faber & Faber Limited. 21s.) This little book will lighten the purses of book-collectors rather than the labours of the biographer. Editorial piety becomes unreasonable when such a letter as:

Dear Will,

By all means, if you like-

Truly, Oscar.

Love to the Valistes.

is printed upon its own page, accompanied by two footnotes each longer than the letter itself. But, though a guinea is a high price to pay for forty pages (fourteen of which are what printers call 'prelims'), and though half a dozen of the sixteen letters are mainly or merely personal to the recipient, there is entertainment as well as information in this volume. Wilde's unpublished note on Henley is at once a specimen and a summary of his style; and his letter after leaving prison, which repeats the lamenting optimism of De Profundis, helps to explain the strange mood of sincere insincerity which inspired that posthumously published apologia. Some extenuation of the high price of this book is provided in the form of excellent binding and printing, and the addition of two new drawings of Wilde by 'Max', as well as one by Professor Will Rothenstein, to whom the sixteen letters were addressed.

## LIFE AND LETTERS

VERNON LEE

# THE HOUSE WITH THE LOOP-HOLES

... Precipice-encurled
In a gash of the wind-vexed Apennine.

Browning.

I felt the romantic queerness of that Apennine house called *Paganori* during the hour or so I stayed there, opening one gaunt, long-closed room after another and listening to the trickle and babble of the tiny stream which moats it round on two sides, where it stands, hidden in chestnut woods high upon that steep Apennine spur. Indeed, I had heard so much of it and its legendary owner for the last twenty years, that, without ever having seen it before save from a distance, I felt it to be full of romance and of oddness even as I went up towards it, brushing the mountain scent of dried myrrh-like herbs and soaked autumn leaves in the draught of the motor.

But I had not understood the particular nature of its oddity and romance even when I was wondering over those six elaborate loop-holes in the parapet of the loggia alongside the chapel; loop-holes through which the legendary Paganori (for the house and the family then bore the same name, although only the house now bears it), the outlaw who spurred his horse up the staircase of the Court of Justice at P—— and terrified the judges who had summoned him to trial, was wont to cover and dispose of all the officious callers who might come up the paved bridle path from that town. That is the legend of that original Paganori as told by the family who have inherited his house and his lands, and perhaps some of his blood, though sobered by godfearing admixtures.

I felt all that about the little place; but I did not begin to understand what it all meant until some days after, when, walking with my Apennine hosts to the first village facing Paganori, I was shown six very fine seventeenthcentury busts in a chapel of the very ancient parish church of Vico.

Those busts do not represent—anything but that! members of the family of the outlaw Paganori. But representing as they do six of his contemporaries and, save for the gorge which separates the former dominions of Modena from those of Lucca, his neighbours, they make one understand by sheer contrast his legend, his loopholes and his own adventurous and abominable self. The busts are of Lucchese patricians of the later seventeenth century: a middle-aged man in the great peruke of a senator, two ladies, one his wife, another, visibly, his sister; two priests, a younger and an older, and a man, ruffed and bearded in an earlier fashion, the father, no doubt, or grandfather; all bearing the same name of Olivieri. At least, so I think; for I confess to negligence in noting down names and inscriptions, so absorbed was I in the busts themselves, the people they represented and the story they suggested.

Taken merely as sculpture, of a school, that of Bernini

and thereabouts, which has left a great deal of very monumental yet intimate portraiture, these busts are uncommonly fine; the treatment of the hair picturesque and full of colour; the modelling of the now ivory-tinted marble very tender in the rendering of cheek and temples and eyelids; so that Renaissance busts would seem angular and rather inhuman alongside.

These six marble people are singularly human; that is the point and beauty of them. Human in the sense of humane, forerunners of the humane eighteenth century; humane with what was meant by the old Italian word, then still in use, umanità, signifying gentleness, courtesy, dignity which unbent from meekness of heart and perfection of breeding. Umanità: they all have it, the two priests, old and young, with their slight pointed beard like that of the Good Pope (he may have been reigning thereabouts) in the Ring and the Book; the beautiful elderly matron and the beautiful sister or bride; the senator who was the present head of the family, and especially the father or grandfather of earlier date, from whom the family's virtues and graces must have flowed in unbroken tradition. And under each bust is a Latin epigraph together with an emblem: the distaff of the matron, who is praised for her vigilance and order; the symbol of wealth under the elder priest, who says: 'It is not for me, but for others, non sibi sed aliis': a little tree and 'Umbra quies et pax' under the younger priest; finally, the emblem of a stormy sea and 'semper idem' for the senator and magistrate; only the venerable father or grandfather requiring neither symbol nor motto. Without any such help one recognizes him and them all for people of steadfast virtue and exquisite refinement, pillars as well as ornaments of society, patrons of art and science, public

benefactors, yet, by some freak, or perhaps from sheer retiringness, buried not in the city whereof they numbered among the hereditary rulers, for Lucca had remained the one solitary Tuscan Republic; but up here, miles away in this little mountain village, on the frontiers of their commonwealth, with steep woods above, scant vines below and all round the deep, deep river ravine and its precipitous rocks.

Moreover, just over against them, across that gorge, not half a mile as a hawk of these mountains would fly, on the shady side of the valley, what except the hidden roofs, the loop-holed loggia of Paganori, and the blood-stained outlaw who bore its name?

Returning, therefore, to Paganori, the legendary bandit and his house, what those busts across the ravine have made me realize is the oddness of such a survival of lawlessness in a country and in a time by no means lawless, free from the bravo and brigand regime of earlier days and of more southern parts of Italy. And the explanation of it is in the geography of the district, an intricate cross-knot of Apennine and Carrara chains, the meeting-place of four sovereign states: the Grand-Duchy of Tuscany, the Duchies of Modena and of Massa, and that rich little republic of Lucca, whereof the family represented by the busts were patricians. Now such a meetingplace of states meant smuggling. And smuggling must evidently have been the, so to speak, ostensible trade of Paganori, both man and house, a trade leading to and cloaking violence and ambush of all kinds, of which the peasantry of that corner of the mountains would be, turn about, the victims and the accomplices. The better-to-do houses of those valleys have often, to this day, their hidden cellars, secret rooms in the wall's thickness; and

everywhere you meet the legend of subterranean passages from ruined castle to ruined castle; and in my childhood warlocks and wizards would still sell the spells necessary for treasure-seeking.

Walking in those mountains one often recognizes that some knifeblade path, dotted with blackened boundarystones, is a smugglers' cat-walk, or that of the excise men set to catch smugglers, and often, no doubt, hand in glove with them. I remember one such especially, above a high pass. The stony crest of the hill is hedged with windwarped beeches, natural covert for desperadoes; and the shaly rock, crumbling under foot, is set with such stones as I have mentioned, stating in fine eighteenth-century lettering, that on one side is the Grand-Duchy of Tuscany, on the other the domains of the House of Este. I struck that path, which I have always called in my mind the smugglers' path, towards sunset. The wind, unfelt in the valley, banged against the rocks and the rough beech-hedge with a sound of distant gunfire. And all round, the pale peaks wrapped and unwrapped themselves, took shape and body or vanished into the pure, pale sky, while the vapours crawled along the nearer mountains and the stormclouds squeezed thick and persistent through the hidden valleys and the mountain portals. A place—if such a ridge only a few feet wide, and so far removed even from the highest mountain ledges could be called a place, an abode of haunting storms and of the angry spirits of long-deceased desperadoes. It was as I said, sunset time. And from an immeasurable distance (it seemed) below, there suddenly floated up the Ave Maria bell of some village invisible in the valley. It might have been the bell of the church where, under their busts, that Lucchese patrician family now lie buried.

And, when alive, they would have doffed their hats and crossed themselves, little guessing what companion their outlaw neighbour had decoyed to that unhallowed place, and whose ears and remorseful (or not?) heart these bells' tones were rising up to, all in vain. . . .

I have continued thinking over the strange conjunction, not only in geographical reality but in my imagination, of the house (and the man) called Paganori, and the busts, at the opposite village, of that family of Olivieri. That

means the latency of a story. But what story?

Having recognized that the outlaw-owner of Paganori must, given times and places, have been primarily, and whatever violence and villainy resulted therefrom, a smuggler, it remains to show in what way the virtuous Olivieri family, despite their horrified aloofness from the ruffian, should nevertheless have become entangled in his evil doings, have suffered for his wickedness, in the person of one of themselves. That the Senator and Magistrate Olivieri should have been an object of the bandit's fear and resentment is likely enough, with the result of perishing by his hand. But even if sufficient as probability (although it would surely have been commemorated on his tomb?) this seems scarcely enough for romance. Now it is my conviction, that romance was involved, and that the connection between the two sets of people, the neighbours on either side of that chasm separating good from evil, was stranger and more intimate than the one between a murdered representative of the law and a vindictive lawbreaker. Indeed, my imagination had at once moved along the old, old hackneyed lines: the two families were united, the mountain gorge was bridged, by love. And obviously love of the son of the one for the daughter of the other: Leander perishing in that torrent

on account of Hero; and Hero being the daughter of Paganori, as Leander was the hope of those virtuous Olivieris.

Of course! And the real tragedy would not lie in mere commonplace murder and bereavement. A son of the Olivieris must needs have been the child of a miracle, at least of an act of divine grace. Born after years of barren wedlock and in answer to passionate prayers and vows, he would be a gift of heaven and naturally consecrate to heaven. The horror would be that just such a one should be embroiled in the evil deeds of that abominable neighbour. And how could that come about save by the sinful entanglements of profane love?

That seems natural enough nowadays or in a middle age of Montagues and Capulets set up on purpose for writers of romance. As a fact, however, it would have been anything but likely in the Italy of the late seventeenth century, for an Olivieri youth to have loved and been beloved by a Paganori maiden; it was difficult for such a thing to happen at all, I mean for the daughter of any Italian seventeenth-century gentleman to have seen and been seen by a (however eligible) young man before the signing of the marriage contract, which we must imagine like the ceremony portrayed in that pseudo-Velasquez family group. Until her wedding-day the daughter of Paganori would have been in a convent, surely. Not so surely, however, just because she was the daughter of Paganori. For being an enemy of society and living in violent sin, he may have preferred his daughter not to be brought up as, say, a daughter of the Olivieri would have been: convents and convent-breeding had a sickly smell in his nostrils accustomed to powder. None of their little wax madonnas for him! Besides, who knows? his reputation and tastes keeping him from wedlock like all other forms of respectability,

his daughter may have been a bastard, perhaps by some forcibly-abducted peasant girl, or some she-brigand loading for him and his bravoes when busy, at those loop-holes, with emissaries of Grand Ducal Law riding up the mountain track? His daughter would be a child of sin; or at least a wild blood, a young hen-hawk whom he kept in his own thieves' nest to perch on his shoulder and perhaps bring down some occasional quarry, as, for instance, this cock-pigeon out of the virtuous dove-cote over the valley. . . .

And speaking of virtue there might, on the other hand, have been a surfeit thereof in the Olivieri bringing up; almost too much purity, gentleness, humanity and humanities (as witness those Latin epigraphs). The two saintly priest-uncles in especial may have been too much of a good thing for even a child of miracle, who might be looking forward to the autumn villeggiatura in that remote ravine as to an escape from civilization and urban studies and works of charity, from visiting the sick, discussing the enclitic  $\delta \hat{\epsilon}$ , the new discoveries of Galilei, and the respective merits of Ariosto and Tasso over the chocolate-cups of academic meetings. We can imagine the boy to have sucked the taste of mountain wildness with the milk of his wetnurse, the perfect Olivieri ladv having been, in mere animal matters, but an imperfect mother. So that ever since young Olivieri could remember, these mountains would mean forbidden raptures: scrambles up beetling cliffs instead of dutiful walks in well-clipped gardens; catching trout by torchlight in the torrent, netting birds on the hill-crests; and surreptitious rides on charcoal-burners' ponies. Had he not, to the agony of his consternated family who gave him up for lost, spent a whole night by a charcoal kiln in the very

highest beech-scrub? And such illicit adventures would be heightened by what he had been told and shown by his rough (and utterly forbidden) companions. Here was the smugglers' path; there the place where the Grand Ducal excise men had been massacred; yonder the blackened walls of the farm burnt down for tale-telling. And was there not a crossroads called (and it is called to this day) Dead Woman, in honour or dishonour of some smuggler's lust or vengeance? Now in all these tales which he coaxed his nurse to repeat when they were back again in the stuffy city, one name was for ever recurring, mingled with the legends of ancient princes and bandits: that of Paganori.

'Never let that name defile my boy's lips,' his mother had said. And when he had asked (though he knew quite well) why? his grave and gentle father had answered that there were good and wise men enough to learn about without children wishing to know about those who had disgraced their country and religion.

In fact, weighing everything, it seems likely that the excellent Olivieris were helping the myths and the mists of the mountains to foster in their boy's mind an otherwise avoidable interest in the ruffian yonside the torrentgorge; investing Paganori's low brutalities and double-dealings with irresistible attractiveness; whence, in the course of time, attempts to see the outlaw; and, incidentally, perhaps a glimpse, occasionally, of the outlaw's daughter; since we have decided that there was a daughter behind those loopholes.

The more I think over it, the greater the certainty that those poor, good Olivieris were unwittingly pushing their only son into Paganori's tracks. And just because they were so bent upon leading him along heavenly paths. His

being an only child, necessary to keep up the honourable name, had been a cause of sadness, because it prevented their bringing up one of themselves (like that uncle and great-uncle and all cadets since time immemorial) for the cloister or the altar. Not indeed for the Church mundanely triumphant wherefrom the quasi-Jansenism of that family was discreetly averse; not for benefices, and violet stockings and the pomps of barrocco papacy; but for the Church of the Saints, of which so many of themselves, learned, humble, self-sacrificing students or missionaries. had been true members. That holy ambition having been denied them by inscrutable Providence, their hopes had concentrated upon giving to God a layman, say a magistrate or natural philosopher, whose purity and mansuetude should have consecrated him wellnigh a priest.

The mother, accepting, half broken-hearted, Heaven's decree of all but barrenness, since hitherto all Olivieris had all been blessed with numerous progeny, offered up secret prayers that this one remaining blossom of the stock should be a lily immaculate, sprung from their pure soil as an offering to God. Nor less fervent had been the resolution of the male members of the family, that greatuncle and uncle still young yet worn by saintliness; that father whose only boast was that he was consistent in all fortunes; and that severe grandfather in the Spanish beard and ruff whose will was only the more paramount for being exercised from the grave. Neither should there be, from the very outset, the slightest chance of mistaking this collective intention. The only son should know what was expected of him from the very earliest: at three he had learned the rudiments of Latin, let alone the elements of piety; at six he was given a tutor, doctissimus vir atque piissimus, from the Oratory; at ten his father and uncles

would take him to learned academic meetings and to hear renowned preachers. Yet with never a word of harshness or a gesture of constraint: these people were not bigots, but true saints; moreover exquisitely bred men and women of the world such as might have been trained by, say, St. Francis of Sales. Their life was full of serenity and sweetness, jucunditate as they would have put it; and even that mountain residence where they occasionally spent their autumn, was well appointed, exquisite. We must imagine their son like those portraits of patrician children which Justus Sustermans painted in Tuscany: the fair hair carefully tended and curling over the lace-edged collar and satin doublet, the beautiful hands (des mains bien faites were essential to a seventeenthcentury gentleman) coming out of delicately-embroidered cuffs, yet by no means inexpert in all noble exercises with sword and dagger. While, as to horsemanship, why the Duke of Newcastle's book was one of those used in his education. Let alone that he should know not merely natural philosophy, the speculations of Galilei and Cartesius, but also all decent and honourable poetry, and such music as was sober and dignified. And then, of course, he must learn to dance and deport himself with grace, become an accomplished cavalier, without which he could not be a perfect Christian, as they expressed it, mixing with the world. But the perfection of that Christianity in the world, and, of course, the marriage for which it was the preparation, was solely to the end of continuing a line of similar perfect Christians such as his family had hitherto always shown. So that, despite the seeming latitude and even worldliness of the boy's education and amusements, it was well understood that he was. in his way, a lily being grown for the Altar.

Hence certain restrictions and the first violent thwarting of his inclinations by that otherwise so indulgent family. At that time the only military career for Italians was in foreign service; and the lad, hearing of the Piccolomini and Montecuccoli, cherished the long-unavowed hope that he might be allowed to enter the armies of the Emperor or the King of Spain. When this was unexpectedly refused on the score that a hereditary senator should be a man not of the sword but of the robe, toga'd as they put it, the boy submitted, but moped visibly. And one evening, a never-to-be-forgotten evening foreboding a much worse one which would end all their hopes, he disappeared. He had fled over the mountaintops and was brought back only after some weeks by the gipsies or smugglers who had promised to convey him to Milan or Mantua, there to enlist to fight the Turks under Sobieski. The vagabonds had known the value of their prize; they had carried him hither and thither, until they had negotiated with his parents for an extortionate reward, and for what went against the Senator's will far more, immunity from legal pursuit. This the boy soon understood, and suffered not only bitter disappointment but intense shame and disgust for the company he had put himself in. When at last the bargain over him had been struck, he was brought back home so starved and broken in body and spirit, that he became delirious as soon as his mother had put him to bed, and the poor Olivieris even despaired of his life. On his recovery, therefore, they decided that no questions should be asked, no reproaches made, in short the whole horrid episode purposely forgotten and treated, if remembered, as a bad dream which would for ever prevent any similar waking reality.

But forgotten it was not by him. And as months, indeed a year or two, went by, the hardships and humiliation and loathsomeness of that escapade were gradually transfigured for the lad, now growing to manhood, into something which he secretly longed for; even the horrible brutalities he had witnessed among those outcasts, the blood he had seen them shed, the nauseating lewdness of their ways, taking on a horrid attractiveness for his troubled adolescent fancy. Yet he must have gone on living quietly and cleanly, and comporting himself in all ways as his family expected.

Indeed, it is probable that for some time after this odious adventure, young Olivieri really became all that they could desire. They were even once or twice alarmed by his over-eagerness for study and his excessive piety: destined to serve God in the world and above all give God new souls, it would not do for their son to go too far in asceticism, surely. . . . Another though conflicting fear counselled them to look out for a suitable bride; their lily must not be gathered unbeknownst by Satan, who, as we all know, often makes short work of a lad's piety once his virtue has suffered a fall. The priestly uncle and greatuncle were perhaps mindful of their own adolescent perils and lapses when they urged this search for a suitable object for virtuous affection. This, however, was a lengthy business, and not an easy one, even with the help of pious and worldly-wise friends; the family would not be satisfied with any of the maidens proposed as the bride of their spotless boy and the mother of their virtuous descendants. However, in the face of the lad's quiet and deeply religious mood, there seemed no such post-haste hurry; and hurry was always distasteful to the Olivieris.

But this sense of security proved fatal. The boy's ascetic

practices were either self-defence or remorse; and Satan had already stolen a march upon those unsuspecting

people.

Some moral poison which the lad had perhaps sucked with the milk of a peasant of those mountains, where (quite unguessed by the excellent Olivieris) half of the scant population were desperadoes, something which had been in abeyance of late years, began to assert itself in him, although he hid it from his friends, from his spiritual director and even from himself, because it somehow seemed a bad dream rather than a reality. I have mentioned how the escapade with the smugglers or gipsies was gradually to take a changed aspect in his recollection. Acts and words which had struck him with horror began, as I have said, to exercise attraction for his morbid appetites, like the carrion game those poachers had fed him on. Especially did what he had called to himself sin par excellence, and resented also for its vulgar unseemliness, return to his mind; the jests and gestures which had disgusted him in the ragged womankind of those people returned occasionally with a new and, alas, an intolerably attractive meaning to his memory. And unluckily another person, besides his virtuous relatives, was watching his transition from boy to manhood. His old nurse, who, like most of their trusted dependants, was by no means the spotless saint those saints thought her to be, had her own views as to how to prepare a youth for wedlock and to cure him of mysticism. By what precise steps she compassed her plans, I neither know nor care to think. But this much is certain that the old nurse's well-meant plots, helped out by some of her less innocent mountain kin, were what brought her foster son to perdition; and in a sense wider and more undoubted than that in which the

father and mother, the priestly uncles and the ghost of the grandfather would have used that word. I mean that the boy became not only the lover of Paganori's illegitimate daughter, but, as a result and price thereof, the companion and accomplice of Paganori himself; the bluff and bloodstained old daredevil no doubt relishing the joke of such chastisement of the law-abiding sanctimoniousness (as he would call it) of his neighbours yonside the valley in the person of their immaculate heir. Perhaps, besides using young Olivieri as an amusement, he marked him for a hostage which might at any moment prove handy.

I do not think the catastrophe was the result of deliberate malice. Only when the Grand Ducal police, the Eight of the Balia, again launched an expedition against Paganori, the second or third after his triumphant appearance on horseback in their council chamber, and when, once more, the countryside was beaten like a covert for that wild boar in human shape, old Paganori found it convenient to give his pursuers someone else to pursue while himself taking refuge among the highest mountain peaks. Anyhow, one stormy autumn night, the police made an attack on Paganori's house, which failed to defend itself as well as usual through its famous loopholes. It was taken, and a woman, said to be the bandit's daughter, was dislodged and pursued down the gorge. where she disappeared, her retreat defended step by step by a single one of Paganori's bravoes, who, having given her time to escape, was finally killed by musket-fire on the plank crossing the torrent, which he had defended single-handed against a considerable band of officers of the law.

Only when daylight broke, his body was picked out of

a pool, and carried up to the Olivieri's house, where it was recognized as that of their only son.

The family was, of course, heartbroken. But it took some comfort in maintaining (and maintained till its final extinction) that the unfortunate youth had rashly volunteered his assistance to the Grand Ducal forces and been shot by the brigands whom he was helping to clear off the earth. The officers and soldiers of the law were quite of this way of seeing things. And old Paganori was indicted, though of course only in contumacia, with the additional offence of abetting the slaughter of poor young Olivieri by certain, unluckily never identified, members of his band. But no one in the mountains ever believed a word of this account; and the legend long persisted that the last of that virtuous family had, though only a stripling, been a desperate though secret smuggler who had perished for love of his chief's illegitimate daughter.

And this I believe to have been the case; since it tallies with all my own impressions both of the house of Paganori and of the people whose carved likenesses I saw in the church across the valley. Let alone that it accounts for the fact that among those funereal busts and inscriptions there is no portrait, nor the very smallest mention, of the unhappy lad whose story I have thus pieced

together.

#### AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

## MARTYROLOGY

A man would indeed need to be a churl, without a grain of sympathy or imagination, who could bring himself to speak or write disrespectfully, or slightingly, of martyrs unto death.

Whether burnt in the fires of Smithfield under Mary Tudor or hung and disembowelled (sometimes whilst still alive) under her sweet sister Elizabeth, or in our own times massacred by Turks or Russians, they are all, be their creeds what they may have been, entitled to our admiration for their courage under torture, whilst for their persecutors we can only feel amazement at their savagery.

Someone has said, probably in his haste, that England no longer breeds saints but only sinners, whilst as for martyrs, our last one (properly so called) was an Arian of holy life, and a great student of the Scriptures, who was consumed by fire at Smithfield during the reign of King James I, for his Trinitarian heresy, amidst a crowd of lookers-on—for Englishmen in those times could apparently 'look on' at anything.

I have used the limiting expression, 'properly so called', to distinguish between those martyrs who have been actually burnt or hung for their religious opinions, and those who have been simply worried to death in recent times for not agreeing and for expressing their disagreement, with the general opinion of respectable people in such matters.

Of these latter-day martyrs there have been almost as

many under the sway of our Philistine rulers, as there were of the former species under the Tudors and Stuarts.

But, just now, I am only concerned with English martyrs of the first kind.

For a long time in England Foxe's Book of Martyrs (first edition 1563) was not only one of the best-known, but also one of the most widely read books in English not credited with divine inspiration.

We have all heard how copies of it were often chained in parish churches so that those parishioners who were fond of reading a good book could do so whenever they found the doors of their parish church open outside the

hours appointed for divine worship.

During part of the sixteenth century, and all through the seventeenth and eighteenth, and the early part of the nineteenth century, Foxe's book, in cheap (and not always complete) editions, was a favourite 'child's book' in many, and particularly perhaps in Nonconforming, homes, and as during those periods Nonconformists numbered more than half the Protestant population that could read for pleasure, any casual reference made to Foxe was as readily understood as would now be a reference to Bunyan's Pilgrim, Swift's Gulliver, or Defoe's Crusoe.

This popularity was no cause for wonder, for not only were all Foxe's martyrs good Protestant martyrs, but the old Fellow of Magdalen owned a style of his own as racy and taking as that of any one of the three great writers just named.

Foxe's touches of humour, often conveyed in marginal notes, are to this hour, despite the grimness and gloom of his subject, provocative of many grins. And then, the short biographies of his heroes and heroines that tell in moving words the sad stories of their harassed lives and glorious endings in death, are beyond the scope of all but the greatest of our fictionists. Foxe has, of course, been run to earth and pulled to pieces—so huge a compilation could not possibly be all true—but no one, however good a Protestant he may conceive himself to be, need complain of being sent to the lively pages of Jeremy Collier, or to the truth-loving Dr. S. R. Maitland, to find out that amongst Foxe's many undoubtable martyrs there were some fakes. To swallow Foxe whole would be a Gargantuan operation, but he was a picturesque writer, and meant well, and wrote a good book. Errors excepted.

Since Foxe's Marian days, the tide has turned. In the interests of truth, humanity, and toleration, I am glad it has.

To-day we have been reminded by a cloud of Catholic 'Beatifications' that in Elizabeth's time there were Catholic martyrs unto death, many of whom as worthy of respect as any who suffered under Bishop Bonner, who apparently was as mild a mannered man as ever burnt a heretic. Let us pay honour where honour is due, and abhor persecution by whomsoever committed.

A little book has just been published entitled Under the Penal Laws. Instances of the Sufferings of Catholics. It is a somewhat resurrectionary work, for it bears on its titlepage the honoured names of two deceased authors, the late Richard Simpson and the late Cardinal Gasquet.

Mr. Simpson was one of the chief and the most important of the contributors to that struggling Catholic magazine, the *Rambler*, which was often in difficulties

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Under the Penal Laws. Instances of the Sufferings of Catholics. Contributed to the Rambler by Richard Simpson: With a foreword by Cardinal Gasquet. London: Burns, Oates, & Washbourne. 1930.

with its ecclesiastical authorities, but he is more widely known to serious students by his noble biography of Edmund Campion. As for the Cardinal, most people will be ready to admit, most cheerfully, that he wrote many informing and agreeable books.

But in this small volume there is very little of either Simpson or Gasquet, for the former was content to tell his stories, and most melancholy and scandalous they are, in the very words of his authorities, whilst the Cardinal only added a few introductory words. Anyone who takes the book up will be wiser when he lays it down; unless, indeed, he was very wise to start with.

Yet somehow, whether it is a Foxe or a Simpson who supplies the material for our reflections, and holds the pen, we note a difference between their treatment of the ill-usage that befell the martyrs with whom they sympathize, and those with whom they do not. No such difference ought to be noticeable.

I need not refer to Foxe—he never purports to conceal his bias—but even Mr. Simpson, a true historian, on the first page of the little book after a properly short reference to the persecutions in Queen Mary's time, goes on to say:

Disliking them as we do, we must yet remember that there was a great difference between upholding the ancient religion by the then established laws of Europe, and establishing a new religion professing to be built on individual freedom of conscience by the most ruthless persecution of all consciences that adhered to the old religion.

'Tilly-vally!'—as Queen Elizabeth used to say—why drag in the laws of a distracted Europe? The only

difference I can clearly discern is the difference between

burning, hanging, and disembowelling!

Dislike was a shabby word to employ! Lord Acton, Mr. Simpson's great friend and patron, and a fellow-contributor to the Rambler, would never have allowed himself to use it in such a connection, for Acton was always capable of dinning into the ears of the Pope himself: 'Thou shalt do no murder!'

But that there was a distinction between the two persecutions carried on under the Tudor sisters is plain enough, but it was too often a distinction without a difference. The result was the same in most cases.

Mary burnt for heresy, Elizabeth hung for treason under the terms of Tudor Acts of Parliament.

The taint of politics runs through all the Cecilian murders, and possibly, in the opinion of their instigators,

amply justified them.

Elizabeth was, by statute law, Queen of England and head of the Anglican Church settled by herself. She was also excommunicaetd by the head of the Roman Church. To plot against her life was High Treason, and then, by a big jump Crown lawyers well know how to take, to do anything that might be supposed to undermine her authority, and to render her seat on the throne insecure, was Constructive Treason—and the construction of 'Constructive Treason' was left to the judges and magistrates to declare. Then by Acts of Parliament, never discussed in public, Catholic priests were forbidden under pain of death to enter the country, and wander about saying masses in hidden chapels and hearing the confessions of the very numerous adherents to the old religion, or to introduce into the realm controversial books. Who could hope, however innocent of High Treason, to escape the

meshes of the law? Whether Elizabeth's life was ever in actual danger I do not know, but certainly it was always in the way of being taken. When we remember how many of the great nobles of the English and Scottish peerages were ready to get rid of anybody who stood in the way of their plots and plans for changing the succession to the Throne, it is not difficult to believe that there were scores of maddened priests living in exile in foreign lands, who would have thought it no great sin, but a lucky chance could it come their way, to remove from the land of the living so inveterate an enemy of their faith, and so huge an obstacle in the way of its restoration to its old home, as good Queen Bess! But the magistrates were at no great pains in the cases that came before them, to find out the actual facts, or to draw distinctions. They, or somebody did it for them, invented what was called the 'bloody question', an hypothetical one: 'If the Pope declared war on the Queen, on whose side would you fight?' This question was pressed very hard in many cases, but in others the magistrates took up a more matter-of-fact line: 'Is it, or is it not the fact, that you have brought into this realm from abroad, one of Dr. Allen's books? Aye or no? If aye, by our law you are guilty, and unless you are reconciled and go to our Church, you must pay the penalty. Call the next case.'

'It is the law of the land.' This is just what the Jews said to Pontius Pilate, who was an honester 'Beak' or Procurator of Judea than any of the Elizabethan magistrates, and had no strong desire to crucify anyone, but only to preserve the Pax Romana. But there were the Pharisees crying out by 'our law He must die', and Pilate did not wish to deny them what little of their law Rome had left for their use. He therefore signed the death

warrant, little dreaming that in doing so he was becoming an humble instrument in the Redemption of the World!

It is perhaps unwise to read too many martyrologies—martyrs, naturally enough, are apt to be self-opinionated, argumentative, and too positive by half; for as was long ago pointed out by a wise man: 'Men can be at least as positive in a mistake, as when they are in the right'.

The Marian martyrs are more open to these criticisms than the Elizabethan ones; but in either case, the short-comings of martyrs are no excuses for their cruel fates.

The great principle of toleration demands that men, and particularly those who for the moment find themselves in authority, must school themselves to learn to tolerate intolerance, and often even what in their wisdom, they deem to be intolerable.

#### ROMILLY JOHN

#### LE TEMPS RETROUVÉ

Such beauty, when the evening holds its breath, This world discovers to my dreaming eyes, Illumined by the light of wasted skies, As in the brooding stillness of her death The tranquil features of one lost and dear Put on, who was most lovely when she breathed; Then death, in memories and lilies wreathed, When she is most remote brings her most near. Upon a level with the sinking sun And looking straight along its twilight beams, I felt the shadows closing one by one Like silent blinds pulled down across my dreams: Then to my soul entered the dear lost day, And there, like sweet remembered fragrance, lay.

#### THE WIND

To-day the wind blows, the merry wind blows; The world is awake in the arms of her love. The grasses bent flat steal the light from above, As invisible travellers hurrying sweep With audible sighing their robes on the grass. Where motion allows commotion indwells In rippling and nodding the season to keep. The weathercock's mad or the tale that he tells; And seedlings bewingèd the more certain signs

Of motion unseen draw the visible lines.—
The draughtsmen all manner of madness discern
Ere they once again captivity learn.
The reeds are the waves that trouble no waters,
The trees are the ears and the eyes of the wind:
The shade flees the light that hurries behind
And chases the sun that rushes before.
The sailor, the miller, for joy or for gain,
Have harnessed the wind to vessel and stone.
The speeding of ships in the ocean far blown,
Their cargo of dust that 's ground from the grain,
We owe to the wind.

True lovers apart,

For the easing of pain in the solitary heart, All fervently pray for a favouring wind.

### **FREEDOM**

A leaf thou art unto the random wind,
A yellow leaf inveigled from its cause
Which leaps and rustles down some alley blind,
There with a borrowed life that knows no pause
To draw death's empty circles o'er the dust.
O wanton spirit, thou sayest that thou art free:
Is this thy vaunted freedom? this thy boast?
To fly as doth the perishable gust,
With sudden impulse leave the parent tree
To gain the restless freedom of a ghost?

#### **FEBRIFUGE**

When the soul shrinks from counting her heart, And when in the bitter throes of her dearth She longs for the sign when she may depart, No longer sustained by the sense of worth; When shades of doubt in the prison of life On her are cast by the bars of earth; When she welcomes the thoughts of the fatal knife That severs the soul from strife—

Then, oh then lie the body down,
And still as a corpse, so deathly still,
Give back to the mother earth her own;
Release the bow of the iron will,
And looking against the empty sky
Let the huge nothing in, until
The liquid soul is a vacant eye
Dissolving life's transparent lie.

## LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH

## **AFTERTHOUGHTS**

#### LIFE AND HUMAN NATURE

Happiness is a wine of the rarest vintage, and seems insipid to a vulgar taste.

There are two things to aim at in life: first, to get what you want; and after that, to enjoy it. Only the wisest of mankind achieve the second.

How awful to reflect that what people say of us is true!

What happens in life is mere litter; but from the wastepaper of perishable events thought can unpack, like pieces of porcelain, priceless and imperishable meanings.

Only those who get into scrapes with their eyes open can find the safe way out.

The lusts and greeds of the body scandalize the soul; but it has to come to heel.

What is more mortifying than to feel that you have missed the plum for want of courage to shake the tree?

All our affirmations are mere matters of chronology, and even our bad taste is nothing more than the bad taste of the age we live in.

That one should practise what one preaches is generally

agreed, but anyone who has the indiscretion to preach what both he and his hearers practise must always incur the gravest moral disapprobation.

Authors know that the age of miracles is not over; how otherwise explain the instantaneous transformations of fools who praise their writings into Paladins of taste?

We are forced like the insects, and cannot help it, to undergo all the metamorphoses preordained for our species.

#### OTHER PEOPLE

Those who set out to serve both God and Mammon soon discover that there is no God.

Most people sell their souls, and live with a good conscience on the proceeds.

All reformers, however strict their social conscience, live in houses just as big as they can pay for.

The saints see men and women through the golden haze of their own goodness, and too nice a discrimination of the characters of others is a sign that you are not too nice a character yourself.

It is among people who think no evil, that evil can flourish without fear.

Goodness is not enough; but what a lustre it gives and delicate glaze to people who are good as well as charming!

'Well, for my part,' they say, 'I cannot see the charm

of Mrs. Jones.' 'Is it not just conceivable,' I feel inclined to answer, 'that Mrs. Jones hasn't tried to charm you?'

Charming people live up to the very edge of their charm, and behave just as outrageously as the world will let them.

If we form the habit of saying everything is pleasant and everyone delightful, we shall suffer in the end the awful fate of believing what we say.

### IN THE WORLD

Social success has a delicious flavour, though it is greatly scorned by those to whose lips the cup has not been proffered.

The romantic impulse of our nature to people the world with gods seems to us pretty in lovers, but in snobs we dislike it.

All worldly goods are good; why otherwise should the world pursue them? And yet the old indictment stands, and crowns and vainglories are best as baubles for our thoughts to play with, like those diadems which drunken kalenders take and give each other at the doors of Persian wine-shops, a brick beneath their heads, their feet resting on the Seven Stars.

To suppose, as we all suppose, that we could be rich and not behave as the rich behave, is like supposing that we could drink all day and keep absolutely sober.

To say what you think will certainly damage you in

society; but a free tongue is worth more than a thousand invitations.

When we find it amusing to shock people, we forget what a shocking experience it is.

Beware of the execrable talk to be heard in certain drawing-rooms of this stony-hearted city. You may find, when too late, that without it you cannot live.

One can be bored until boredom becomes a kind of mystical experience.

'O joy!' sings a bird in the heart, 'O joy!' another bird answers; while the world, like a large, thoughtful cat, sits by and watches.

Words are not always mere words: a few almost inaudible articulations may tie two people together, unhappily, for life.

# ART AND LETTERS

The indefatigable pursuit of an unattainable perfection, even though it consist in nothing more than the pounding of an old piano, is what alone gives a meaning to our life on this unavailing star.

Artists who do not love their art are more numerous, and more unhappy, than we think.

Poverty and her sister Solitude, to whom princely talents used to look for their tuition—how are these two shabby and austere old Maids of Honour now hooted at by the young!

What humbugs we are, who pretend to live for beauty, and never see the dawn!

How amazing are those moments when we really possess our possessions!

#### AGE AND DEATH

We grow with years more fragile in body, but morally stouter, and can throw off the chill of a bad conscience almost at once.

An evil name, which is a drawback in youth, sheds a kind of lustre on old age.

There is more felicity on the far side of baldness than young men can possibly imagine.

What music is more enchanting than the voices of young people when you can't hear what they say?

The denunciation of the young is a necessary part of the hygiene of older people, and greatly assists the circulation of their blood.

Don't laugh at a youth for his affectations; he is only trying on one face after another to find a face of his own.

Unrequited affections seem in youth unmitigated woes: only later do we learn to appreciate the safe, sad charm of these bogus heartbreaks.

If we shake hands with icy fingers, it is because we have burnt them so horribly before.

What with its crude awakenings can youth know of the rich returns of awareness to elderly people from their afternoon naps, of their ironic thoughts and long retrospections, and the sweetness they taste of not being dead?

Just when they sit down to enjoy in peace their evening meal of existence, the tables of most people are pounced upon and pillaged by harpies, their children.

Because once, in the unbelievable past, they underwent that amazing mutation, there are elderly people who will tell you that they know what love is.

It is the follies we could not see through in our youth which make us play the fool when we are old.

Why are happy people not afraid of death, while the insatiable and the unhappy so abhor that grim feature?

When hope fades away and belief and craving; and we come to contemplate in temporal things only their eternal meanings, then our life ceases at last to be a sham and a failure, and dainty, when we die, will be our death.

# MYSELF

The extreme oddness of existence is what reconciles me to it.

Our personal affairs are not really worthy, as Plato said, of our consideration; the fact that we are forced to take them seriously (as I was forced to run after my hat when it blew off to-day) being, as I felt acutely, the ignoble part of our condition.

'Let me cease,' I pray, 'O thou Perfectly Awakened, to remain as an ape in the great world-forest, perpetually ascending and descending in search of the fruits of folly.'

How my Reason totters in her contemplative tower, when people say that they have seen me in the street!

I like my universe as immense, grim, icy, and pitiless as possible.

When to the lady I met at luncheon I tried to explain that there is no enchantment in life like that of disenchantment with it, she looked at me as if I were a cloud or a steeple on the horizon, and her answer was a cold as the moon.

When I look at those beautiful and mysterious apparitions we call people, I like to think of their adorations one for another, how they listen for each other's voices, and love to gaze in the enchanted mirrors of each other's eyes.

'Oh, for an axe!' my soul cries out in railway stations, 'to hew limb from limb all the fiends and Jezebels between me and the ticket-office!'

When I come in talk on a blank wall of stupidity facing me, why do I rush stupidly on to break my bald head against it?

I might give my life for my friend, but he had better not ask me to do up a parcel.

Like other Moralists, I like to poke about in that dark

cabinet, the human heart, and expose its more shady corners.

And what pursuit is more elegant than that of collecting the ignominies of our nature and transfixing them for show, each on the bright pin of a polished phrase?

But it is not always easy to treat men and women as apes, and not baboon ourselves in the process.

Aphorisms are salted and not sugared almonds at Reason's feast.

On scenes of worldly splendour I gaze with eyes more mild than those of Moses, when at the sight of the Golden Calf and the dancing his heart waxed wroth within him.

How pleasant it is to sip with the impunity of years those cups of worldly enchantment that would have been rank poison in our youth!

I don't hate the aristocracy, but I do wish they wouldn't publish slip-slop with their photographs in the penny papers.

People say that life is the thing, but I prefer reading.

It is the misery of young people that they have to read each other's books.

From the bright, unbookish constellations I turn my eyes back to the dim-lit reading-room of this circulating library, the earth.

Of all the themes of sentimental novels most do I love

a marriage, loveless in appearance, between a high-souled hero and heroine who really do adore each other, but are too proud—ah, far too proud—to avow it,

Till suddenly,
After years of icily-polite relations,
The flame of their mutual ardour blazes out,
And they fall at last
(While I almost swoon away with bliss)
Into the heaven of each other's arms.

Thank heavens! the sun has gone in, and I don't have to go out and enjoy it.

How often my soul visits the National Gallery, and how seldom I go there myself!

I shouldn't mind, though living to my hundredth year, being like Fontenelle, who never wept or laughed, never ran or interrupted anyone or lost his temper; to whom all the science of his day was known, but who all his life adored three things: music, painting, and women—about which he said he understood absolutely nothing.

Or like Huet, that polite old Bishop of Avranches ('flos Episcoporum', a German scholar called him), who lived to be ninety-one, and read Theocritus every year in his favourite month of May.

Or again I think with envy of the octogenarian Firdusi, who made real the dream of his childhood, when gazing into the irrigation canal that flowed by his father's garden, the Persian boy reflected that it would be a fine thing to leave an image of himself in the world that passes.

Or the learned old Baron Walckenaer, who wrote important books on spiders, solitary bees and Madame de Sévigné; who established on a sound historical basis the chronology of Ninon de l'Enclos's lovers, and published a romance called L'Ile de Wight, in which island he located his dream of bliss and his ideal habitation.

It would have been a disillusion for the Baron had he known how, standing on a little platform at the top of his house at Farringford, and gazing up through a telescope at the icy constellations which hung in a horror of bottomless space above that island, Tennyson would sometimes shiver, and almost, for a moment, doubt the existence of God.

As down an abyss without bottom all my life I have been pouring masses and masses of information into the vacancy I call my mind.

But most of all I envy the octogenarian poet who joined three words: 'Go, lovely Rose', so happily together that he left his name to float down through time on the wings of a phrase and a flower.

When I look at the ocean, which seemed so inadequate an object of contemplation to Coleridge—he and Wordsworth were sailing in 1798 on their memorable visit to Germany from Yarmouth in the Hamburg packet, and on Monday, the 17th of September, when the ship was out of sight of land and Coleridge came on deck and gazed at the objectless waters, he was exceedingly disappointed, he tells us, by the narrowness and nearness of the horizon, and was aware of none of that immensity

which he had expected to find in such an unimpeded sea-prospect; so poorly indeed can objects directly before our senses satisfy the imagination, that 'awful power', as his fellow-tourist was afterwards to call it—when, as I say, I look at the ocean, I remedy the defect which Coleridge noted, by contemplating it through the magnifying-glass of our poetic vocabulary; and by calling it 'unpathed', 'unfathomed', 'insatiate', and 'outrageous', I arrive at a more adequate conception of the view of flat water before me.

There are great youths, too, whose achievements one may envy; the boy David who slew Goliath; Bishop Berkeley who annihilated the external world at the age of twenty-five in an octavo volume, and David Hume who, by sweeping away in his youth all the props of the human understanding, destroyed for ever the possibility of knowledge.

To be an elegant and acrimonious scholar, and make emendations in Greek texts that shall fill the world with wonder;

Or an illustrious Egyptologist; with spectacles and a white beard;

Or a lord of thought, and sum up the universe in a single phrase,

And know all about it, whatever it is, and break the teeth of the young lions, break their great teeth in their mouths;

Or to lie in bed day after day like Joubert, in a pink

dressing-gown, trying to think nothing and feel no emotion.

How hard it is to go wrong! I seem to find all the more pleasant paths of transgression barricaded against me.

Round and round the world, on the storms that blow always about the Southern Pole, antarctic albatrosses float for ever; and only once a year they land to lay their eggs on some island of the South Pacific. So from the circumgyrations of its skiey wheelings once in a while my soul descends to earth to hatch its meditations.

How I should like to distil my disesteem of my contemporaries into prose of such perfection that they would all be forced to read it!

But good style depends, the Persian critics tell us, upon freedom from monetary troubles. Only thus, they say, can one arrive at perfect diction.

When by sips of champagne and a few oysters they can no longer keep me from fading away into the infinite azure, 'You cannot,' I shall whisper my last message to the world, 'be too fastidious'.

### HARRY GRAHAM

# ELSIE GLOY

(A Poem of Innocence)

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the river Wandle;
A maiden, in those early days,
Whom there were very few to praise,
And fewer still to fondle.
She had a rustic, woodland air
That was extremely hard to bear.

Oft had I heard of Canon Gloy
And, by the Wandle water,
Where I went poaching as a boy,
I used to gaze with secret joy
Upon his seventh daughter
Who, while her father was in church,
Would help me snare the local perch.

How sweet it was to watch her swim!
What fullness of perfection!
So blithe she was, so lithe of limb;
Each primrose by the river's brim
Reflected her complexion!
So gracefully she splashed about;
She was, indeed, a perfect trout.

No minnow sporting in the stream Was half so deft or agile! Fit subject for a poet's theme—

I looked on her as Love's Young Bream—Alas! she proved as fragile!
A human pike arrived, one day,
And whirled my little dace away!

An artist he, in velvet cape,
With palette, oils and brushes,
Who wished to paint an aquascape
And, noticing a female shape
Entangled in the rushes,
He came to ask what he had found
That was so large and smooth and round.

'It is Miss Elsie Gloy,' I said,
In accents somewhat scathing.
'Then do you think,' he cried, 'instead
Of posing on the river-bed
As Amphitrite bathing,
She would consent to sit to me
As Venus rising from the sea?'

A snake had entered Paradise!
The maiden, all unwitting,
Regardless of my good advice,
Consented once—nay, even twice—
To give the man a sitting.
The love she bore for me grew dim,
But oh! the deference to him.

She posed each day from ten to four (With half an hour to rest in), And though I could not but deplore

The scanty garments that she wore,
These sessions so clandestine
Supplied him with the atmosphere
To paint 'the picture of the year'.

Now Canon Gloy had got a friend,
A famed Academician,
Who always asked him up to spend
A night in London and attend
That Summer Exhibition
Where artists (and some others, too)
Expose their wares to public view.

So off to town the Canon went,
To view the season's pictures.
His gaze on catalogues he bent;
Some portraits he would compliment,
On others he passed strictures;
No single canvas did he miss
Till suddenly—ah, what was this?

This daub, enskied beneath the dome,
How pagan, how immoral!
'Venus Emergent from the Foam,'
Arrayed in sea-weed and a comb,
Two cray-fish and some coral—
As shyly from the frame she smiled,
He recognized his seventh child!

'O Death,' he cried, 'where is thy sting?'
He staggered like a drunkard.
'An enemy hath done this thing!

Oh, hark the herald angels sing!'
He was completely bunkered.
He had a stroke, I understand
(Which left him still with two in hand).

'Show me the gay Lothario
Who's compromised my Elsie!'
He left the crowded picture-show,
And sought the painter's studio
In Cheyne Gardens, Chelsea;
And there he found the dirty dog
He'd spotted in the catalogue.

'Thou wilting snail!' the Canon raved,
Misquoting from the Psalter,¹
'Though scurvily thou hast behaved,
My daughter's honour must be saved!
Go, lead her to the altar!'
The painter answered: 'All serene!
So long, and toodle-oo, old Dean!'

So, in the Chapel called Savoy,
He purged his grave offences
By marrying Miss Elsie Gloy
Whose services he could employ
To lessen his expenses.
No other models did he need;
She proved a model wife indeed!

She loved to pose (with little on)
As Jezebel or Circe,
As Leda (with attendant swan),

1 Psalm lviii, 8.

Antaea (with Bellerophon),
Or Beldam (without Mercy),
While, as Europa (with a bull)
Her cup of joy was nearly full.

Supreme in Chelsea now she reigns,
The centre of a salon,
Surrounded by a herd of swains,
And if perchance her spouse complains
She merely answers: 'Allons!
La vie est brève; un peu de fun,
Un peu de rêve, et puis c'est done!'

That is the life she loves to lead,
As Queen of all Bohemia.
Her courtiers may belong, indeed,
To what is called the 'Wildflow'r' breed.
And suffer from anæmia,
But still her heart with pleasure thrills
When dancing with those daffodils.

Her cocktail parties all adore.

The more excited she grows,
Reclining cross-legged on the floor,
The more her guests delight to roar
Like spiritual negroes,
Declaiming that the sons of God
Are always adequately shod.<sup>1</sup>

Although her voice is much inclined
To wander off the note, she
Will oft let joy be unrefined

'All God's Chillen got Shoes!'

(Especially when she has dined)
And render, blotto voce,
Plucking her ukulele strings,
Such songs as 'If my worms had wings!'1

Like some Bacchante, sitting there,
Some rustic, pagan goddess;
Her sandalled feet are blonde and bare,
Last nights' dessert is in her hair,
And while her ample bodice
Is decked with moss or edelweiss,
Her skirt is trimmed with corn and mice.

Ah, me! By Wandle waters now
I roam in deepest dudgeon.
I wander lonely as a cow,
For there is none to show me how
To snare the smallest gudgeon.
I'm left with naught but eggs to poach—
A knight sans perch et sans (rep)roach!

<sup>1</sup> Si mes vers avaient des ailes!, by Reynaldo Hahn.

# READERS' REPORTS

### LEIGH HUNT

The extraordinary conflicting evidence of contemporaries, even of friends, has obscured Leigh Hunt's character from the eyes of posterity. Was he 'particularly disagreeable, 'as Macready says; did he behave, as Hazlitt thought, with 'overweening self-complacency'; or was he really, in Macaulay's words, 'a very clever, a very honest and a very good-natured man?' With such various evidence, and much more of the same kind, his biographer is faced; he can blacken or whitewash at will, but the true character of the man was neither black nor white, but a kind of chiarascuro, an unusually concentrated mingling of good and bad. Mr. Blunden, in his full and longexpected biography (Cobden Sanderson. 21s.), has collected from numerous sources, some of them hitherto unknown, material for the best and most complete study of Leigh Hunt that has yet been written. For this work he is well qualified by his deep knowledge of the literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a qualification which he shares in large measure with Leigh Hunt himself. But in some way he has not hit the nail squarely on the head. I closed his book with that feeling of disappointment which one experiences at the sight of something attempted but not perfectly done. Sometimes his style irritates by its deliberately elusive effects: and yet style alone cannot spoil a book of this kind, though it may alienate the reader's sympathy. Sometimes, again, one is conscious of an excess of zeal to justify Hunt's conduct. without adequate statement of all the evidence. This is a more serious fault. Hunt, it is true, has been much

maligned, and even calumniated in the past, for his vagueness in money-matters, and for his habit of getting on people's nerves. (Did not Keats say that Hunt had made Mozart intolerable for him?) But he lived in an outspoken age when critics did not hesitate to express themselves with disgusting frankness, so that much that has been said against him can be discounted for personal animosity or jealousy. Mr. Blunden, however, is inclined to discount almost everything that has been spoken against his hero, or to pass over bare and rather disagreeable facts. The consequence of this is, that one rarely feels that contact with character which is the beginning and end of biography. Mr. Blunden has kept Hunt to himself, shy, perhaps, as a poet to bring him face to face with his audience. Something has been withheld; the biographer disappears with his subject at a decisive moment, and the audience is left darkling.

Much remains that is beautiful and interesting. Beautiful, the opening description of Hunt's childhood at Christ's Hospital, and the later account of the meetings with Keats and Shelley in his house on Hampstead Heath. Interesting, the complicated history of Hunt's career as a journalist, and most of all the revelations concerning Marianne Hunt. Mr. Blunden might have emphasized Hunt's claim to be the founder of the 'intellectual' weekly and the so-called 'middle' article, though he is quick to realize and to point out Hunt's amazing faculty for spotting the winner in his periodical essays. If Hunt did not actually discover a genius, he was among the first to recognize one. The names of Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Tennyson, were always on the tip of his tongue or his pen. In 1831 he put Alfred Tennyson before his brother Charles, and twenty years after-who knows with what

selflessness?—recommended the former for the laureate-ship.

As a critic, and therefore in a sense as a public servant, Hunt served well and faithfully. Only in his private life did he fail, and his inability to overcome its constant troubles and anxieties lies at the root of the accusations that have been made against him. Perhaps his cupboard was burdened with more than its fair share of skeletons: certainly his wife, Marianne, not to mention his son John, was an unusually horrible one. Mr. Blunden has made this perfectly clear, and I think that anyone who reads the letter he has printed from Dr. Bird, who had attended her, is bound to revise his opinion of Hunt. That his wife was 'the most barefaced, persevering, pertinacious of mendicants' seems almost certain; that she drank herself to death on a bottle of brandy a day, and on copious pots of ale concealed under the bed is proved by Dr. Bird, who was a witness to her sordid practices. Was Hunt totally blind to them, or did he pretend blindness? Mr. Blunden reserves judgement. 'He saw everything through books,' wrote Thornton Hunt of his father, and therein, it seems, was the secret of his failure. He made no effort to grapple with the problems of existence, but allowed himself to drift aimlessly. 'This is a beautiful world,' he exclaimed to the astonished Hawthorne, forgetting the deaths of Keats and Shelley, his quarrels with Byron and Hazlitt, the battle of Waterloo, his debts, Marianne tipsy in the next room, and his children begging in Grosvenor Square.

It would be interesting to know if Jane Carlyle meant to be ironical when she gave him the most incongruous, the most ironical, and yet in some ways, the most appropriate of titles: *The Talking Nightingale*  Robert Peckham, by Maurice Baring (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.).

'It is not in the storm nor in the strife
We feel benumb'd and wish to be no more,
But in the after-silence on the shore,
When all is lost except a little life.'

These four lines from Byron, which the author has chosen as a motto, suit his story exactly. Its merit is that every incident in it contributes to that feeling which those lines

express.

In a church in Rome may be read a Latin epitaph to one Robert Peckham, an Elizabethan squire who left his country because he could not live in it without the faith in which he was brought up, and having come to Rome, died there because he could not live apart from his country. It is this epitaph which the novelist has expanded into a short autobiography, every incident of which is consonant with history and the hero's particular predicament, and in which, this is its merit, the cadence of the story expresses the gravity, pathos and simplicity of Byron's lines. Robert Peckham's father is an historical character, and typical of those English noblemen whose loyalty to the Throne prevented them from opposing the Reformation, and who justified their disloyalty to their Church by encouraging themselves in the hope that the changes which they detested were only temporary. There is a love interest in the story of the son Robert, and on looking back he sees that his life miscarried owing to his having, in matters of the heart as well as in religion, taken the easy line of least resistance and of obedience to a formal loyalty of word rather than to the dictates of his inner nature. It is a short, grave and charming book, in its completeness and unity one of the best

that Mr. Baring has written, though in subtlety of character-drawing and situation and vividness of detail it naturally does not approach his modern novels. Everything in it is subdued to a pervasive tone which lends it the simplified completeness of, say, one of Walton's Lives.

The English Novel from the Earliest Days to the Death of Joseph Conrad, by Ford Madox Ford. (Constable. 5s.) Mr. Ford holds, with Mr. George Moore, that the craftsman's is the only true criticism of fiction. He compares this book to the old maps in which 'the cartographer left in his plans blank spaces in places where his enemies dwelt and labelled them: "Here be Crocodiles," "Here be Stenches!" or "Anthropophagi! Avoid this Land".' Which was useful because it told you which parts of the earth that kind of cartographer disliked. 'It is with a map of that sort,' says Mr. Ford, 'that I am trying to provide you. No other sort is of the remotest value. Nor is it even possible, critics being human.' This is rather hard on the ordnance surveyors of literature, but Mr. Ford is right enough about his own book: 'Plague and Pestilence!' is writ large across the Fielding country, 'Here be Nuggets of Pure Gold' describes Marryat land, Wuthering Heights and Shandy Hall are left right off the map, the greater part of England is a desert, and France is El Dorado.

Mr. Ford can find very little in English fiction between Gulliver's Travels and The Way of All Flesh that he would dare show to a grown-up Frenchman—that 'Boney' of the literary nurseries. Who is this grown-up Frenchman we hear so much about? Did not the sophisticated Voltaire, whom the still more sophisticated Chesterfield very properly snubbed, despise the works of Shakespeare? So much for his judgement. Did not Stendhal with all his adult

contemporaries bow down and worship Walter Scott? Could any Frenchman who had not grown out of his admiration for Molière despise the golden comedy and tough wit of *The Egoist?* And as for the history of the novel, we have Professor Saintsbury's word for it that every method of writing prose fiction has been invented and brought to some sort of perfection in England.

The novelist's aim as Mr. Ford sees it is to render a scene (evoke is perhaps the better word), not merely to narrate the facts: the reader must be made to live through the scene himself rather than hear about it from an evewitness. The illusion is lost if the author appears from the wings to give the house his views on life or to comment on the actors; it is this habit in such easy-going amateur's as Fielding and Thackeray that drives the sternly professional novelist to call upon the name of Flaubert. It was certainly a snobbishness in Thackeray that made him constantly remind the reader that this writing was only a game after all, and the very heights to which the illusion rose in his best scenes made his fall the greater; but it is grossly unfair in Mr. Ford to lump Esmond with the rest, for this is so much his best that, as Trollope told him, none of the others came second. If rendering the life of a bygone age is the test of an historical novel, Esmond is at least as great as Salammbo.

With Fielding the case is different; he never creates the kind of illusion Mr. Ford is after and, in his best work at least, apparently never attempts it. Tom Jones is not meant to be a serious picture of life; it is a mock-heroic epic, belonging rather to comedy; and for comedy Mr. Ford has very little use.

It is, therefore, natural enough for Mr. Ford to love and admire Richardson, and given his bias we can sympathize with his honest dislike of Meredith though, if most of his novels were full of faults, he produced in Harry Richmond and The Egoist a perfect romance and a perfect comedy. But what does he mean by rejecting Sterne?—Sterne, the master of character-illusion and a deliberate technician? Again, one can understand a preference of Peter Simple to that unwieldy monster War and Peace, but why, if you can admit Richardson and Defoe, should you definitely class honest Marryat as the greatest English novelist?

The merit of Mr. Ford's book is, as he suggests, to goad the reader into examining for himself reputations he has been content to take on trust. To the writer of fiction the book is tantalizing: Mr. Ford could tell us so much about how to get the effects if he would let us take the effects themselves for granted. If he should ever set himself to write the long, highly technical work on fiction to which this might admirably serve as preface, there is no doubt that he would produce something worthy to sit on the same shelf as Mr. Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction*, which is so far the only work of its kind.

Humanity Uprooted, by Maurice Hindus. (Cape. 15s.) Some of the English, by O. M. Hueffer. (Benn. 10s. 6d.) Here are two books of unusual interest, and I recommend anyone who reads either to read the other immediately after it. If he goes on to Lord Ronaldshay's Heart of Aryavarta, he will have yet more light on the complexity of the world we live in.

Mr. Hindus and Mr. Hueffer both write as exiles returning to the country of their birth and determined to see what it is really like. In method as in subject their books are complementary to each other. Mr. Hindus is

more concerned with ideas and types, though he has a gift for the apposite anecdote. Mr. Hueffer is most at home with individuals and their ways; his philosophy of the whole matter only shows through here and there. Both of them left me with the feeling that there is more to be said; in his broad survey of Soviet Russia Mr. Hindus sometimes seems to forget that even Russians have idosyncrasies; Mr. Hueffer's affectionate concentration on Romwell (a South London borough not difficult to identify) sometimes overlooks those other English who are not of that fold. This only means that each of them has written the book he meant to write and not another, and I have very little doubt that in the historical bibliographies of 2030 both of them will figure as documents of great value.

The piquant thing about them is that while Mr. Hueffer's book explains why Russia hates England so furiously, Mr. Hindus's book explains why England is so utterly bored by Russia. A true story may convey the contrast. A few years ago a Russian delegate was being driven into the country by way of Hammersmith, Ravenscourt Park, Acton, and Ealing. At the sight of the cheerful myriads jogging from the little red houses to the shops and from the pictures to the pubs he passed from the sadness to the rage of despair. 'You want bledshood,' he shouted to his guide, 'bledshood'. All the good and bad qualities of Romwell are arrayed against Russia, and even against the understanding of Russia. Under Mr. Hueffer's kind but searching glance Romwell displays itself as the seat of all the virtues and vices which make for stability and incuriousness: it hates violence, it is kindly, honest, and temperate; it is invincibly sceptical, and while it is as suggestible as a Polynesian or a child, its attention flags as soon. Security is its postulate, and its ideal is ease: ease

spiced with that delight in competitive consumption which one economist has diagnosed as the driving force of every bourgeoisie. The middle-classes took over the culture of the aristocracy, substituting self-importance for dignity; Romwell has taken it over at third hand and dropped even the self-importance.

The theme of Mr. Hueffer's book, in fact, is the natural elevation of a proletariat into a bourgeoisie of the traditional type; of Mr. Hindus's book, its forcible exaltation into something new. Whether Romwell has the brains, the will, or the physique to make anything out of its present way of life is doubtful. It has no religion, no science, no discipline: its only inclination to art is a barbaric love of flowers and noise; wonder has been destroyed by over-stimulation. The Russian is entering the early Victorian phase of civilization:

### O brave new world That has such tractors in it—

passionately credulous, a dogmatist, a rigorist, as thoroughly persuaded as the contemporaries of Tennyson that he is the Ancient of the earth and in the morning of the times. There is indeed one difference in which the whole interest of the experiment lies. Mr. Hindus enumerates the devices which the Russian authorities employ to make the business man, the worker for private profit, feel himselfa dirty skunk. Will they succeed? There are 120,000,000 workers for private profit on the land and only 3,000,000 comrades in industry. On this great note of interrogation all reflections on Russia to-day must close.

T. E. Brown: A Memorial Volume, by Various Contributors. (Cambridge University Press. 10s.) The Isle of Man Centenary

Committee have published in very charming form contributions from fourteen men of letters who were from time to time and under differing conditions in touch with the Manx poet, T. E. Brown, who was born in 1830. Sir Herbert Warren passed away while the pages were still in the press. Of the other writers—and some of them bear noted names—we like Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's Memoir best, though Sir Henry Newbolt has, as an old Cliftonian, a brief but telling reminiscence. Canon Wilson, of course, demands a hearing, and Sir Hall Caine's tribute is touched by genuine emotion, and ends on a human cry of sorrow. Manxmen, who did not always understand their countryman, that strangest blend of cleric, schoolmaster, pagan and faun, are coming to realize more and more that a great man in their little Israel passed from them when Brown died, and his place in the wider circle of English poets is more assured every year. There were drawbacks to his genius, as 'Q' points out: he was too generous in sharing his emotions with the world; he was, as he himself confessed, 'a born sobber', and his grinding Oxford experience left a scar on his soul never wholly effaced, so that his amazing lyrical giftand it was amazing-came to him too late. But Clifton will never forget him, and his was, at its fullest, a very startling and even unique gift. It is permitted to dislike Memorial Volumes, and as we read this, a growing feeling of disappointment stole over us. The essential Brown seemed to have slipped, in death as he would slip in life, through his friends' hands. It is the Brown of 'The Lily-Pool', of 'The Organist in Heaven' with its magnificent close, of 'Risus Dei', of 'Respondet Demiourgos', of 'Disguises', 'Praesto', 'Per Omnia Deus', 'Catherine Kinrade in Heaven', and, above all, the marvellous

'Epistola ad Dakyns', that in their boldness and their inner vision have not their counterpart in English poetry. Indeed, the avoidance of the 'Epistola', though the facsimile of a page is given, almost suggests that the contributors are in some way nervous of it. Well; it has its message as about the strangest, finest piece of earthmysticism, tinged by emotion, that has been written. Another quarrel we have with the authors is their odd depreciation of 'the rustic pedantry' of Barnes's Dorset dialect poems. Sometimes, they think, dialect helps: it helped Burns and Scott, and (this is not mentioned) Tennyson's 'Northern Farmer'. But Brown is judged to be wise in his partial avoidance of the Manx, and, perhaps, with his Puck-like capacity of mimicry, this is true. But who on earth prefers Barnes's English to his Dorset poems, with their tender homeliness? Apparently, the skilled contributors to this volume. There is nothing to do but to bow the head, and pass on. Anyhow, some biography of T. E. B. has been long overdue; and we are grateful for what is given us. But why are we told in one place that he was a small man, and in another that he was of big, burly build? It all seems part of his general elusiveness.

### THE ADVANTAGES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

Sherlock Holmes is dead—dead with the man who, whatever criticisms may be made of him, was incomparably the greatest writer of detective sagas in the English language. It is of no use to point out that Conan Doyle sometimes wrote very bad English, that his plots now and then involved such fantastic improbabilities as that of the 'half-chapter of Thucydides' (set in an examination paper, which occupied three whole long galley-proofs), that

Holmes's deductions were sometimes very unlikely, that he was quite inadequately equipped on the scientific side, that some of the stories contain no detection and practically no plot, etc. All of these criticisms are true, in part and at times; but Sherlock Holmes remains unaffected by them and without rival or successor. Mr. Freeman's Dr. Thorndyke perhaps comes nearest; but one has only to write the name to feel the difference. Who could say 'Dr. Thorndyke' to his neighbour in the Tube with any reasonable expectation of being understood? For highbrows and fans to declare that 'Conan Doyle is---' (out of date, exploded, or what not), is as idle as the many attempts made to assign the same fate to Gilbert and Sullivan: the crowds in either case give the rash prophet the lie. Even such an admittedly inferior collection as the last volume of short stories could no more hurt Holmes's reputation than two ducks in a match could hurt Dr. Grace's.

This being so, let us see if we can at all divine what there is of eternity in the creation of Sherlock Holmes, in order that (perhaps) some chronicler yet unborn may be assisted to repeat the miracle. I think we must say that the head and front of Conan Doyle's success was Sherlock Holmes himself—that is to say, the successful creation of a character who had, as nearly as possible, no character at all, but only characteristics, and those characteristics such as anybody—the public in the widest possible sense of the word—could understand and appreciate.

Sherlock Holmes had no character, any more than he had any private life. The few sporadic references which are made to his history and his relatives are beside the point; they only interest intellectualist fiends like Father Ronald Knox, and are as incidental as the fact that

Holmes wore trousers or sometimes caught a cold. Nothing about him is worked into the semblance of a man, as it would have been had his author desired to give him a character. To take one example only, he was, we are given to understand, a dope fiend, and his creator's own medical training must have made him perfectly acquainted with the normal effects of cocaine upon the character. But none of these effects appeared upon Sherlock Holmes—why? Because he had no character to be affected, only characteristics sharp and separate, of which cocaine-bibbing was one.

This is as it should be. The great British public likes to think of its justice as impersonal; it does not want the policeman to be a man with a heart like you—at least, not with inhibitions and complexes like you; it leaves the volatile detective of Gaul to burst into tears, fall in love, or even to be related to the criminal. But it does demand recognizable characteristics, and here Conan Doyle took, one must say, far more trouble than the majority of his imitators. We may not believe in the existence of Sherlock Holmes; but we know, if he did appear at any moment, exactly what he would look like, how he would behave, and what he would say. This last is a most important point, and one often forgotten by later writers, whose detectives' speeches are too often lamentably undistinguishable from those of their minor characters. Even in the very first story of the very first volume the famous cut-and-thrust dialogue appears:

'It must be where she can lay her hands upon it. It must be in her own house.'

'But it has twice been burgled.'

'Pshaw! They did not know how to look.'

'But how will you look?'

- "I will not look."
- 'What then?'
- 'I will get her to show me.'
- 'But she will refuse.'
- 'She will not be able to. . . .'

This is authentic; this can be recognized anywhere, by anyone who has read a line of Sherlock Holmes. And it was upon points like this that Conan Doyle concentrated with such careful craftsmanship that, whether any particular story is good or bad, it is a story of Sherlock Holmes and of no one else.

Further, anyone can appreciate Sherlock Holmes. He had a marvellous brain, truly, but he was not highbrow. His conversation alluded, of course, to things of which Watson and the British public know nothing, but it alluded to them in a way which made it plain that they were matters of specialized knowledge, out of ordinary people's ken. They were part of the magician's patter; but the information which he intended to convey to his admirers was always perfectly plain, not wrapped up in a jargon which only highbrows of a particular set and a particular period can understand. Lastly, Holmes was not really possessed of any great esoteric knowledge, and his methods were such as could be employed indefinitely. In this way, what appears at first sight to be a weakness was turned into a strength. When Holmes made one of his lightning deductions about people's occupations, his hearer-Watson or another-was apt to remark that he could have thought of that himself. And so he could, if Conan Doyle had let him. But Dr. Thorndyke's hearers, to take a single example, cannot. They cannot know that there are several kinds of duckweed and that the corpse has swallowed the wrong one, or that the parasites of elephantiasis come into the blood-stream in the middle of the night; and thus, though they may have all the facts of the case, they have not the knowledge to deal with them. Similarly, writers who invent a detective with an outstanding peculiarity, like the blindness of Max Carrados, should make sure that the peculiarity is one which can stand the strain of long exploitation—that there is a sufficient variety of coups which a blind detective can bring off that a seeing one could not. For the essence of the detective saga is infinite variations upon the same theme.

The advantages of Sherlock Holmes may be better appreciated by a comparison of his saga with some volumes of short stories which have recently come in for criticism. Mrs. Agatha Christie, in The Mysterious Mr. Quin (Collins. 7s. 6d.), has written a pleasant book with no immortality about it. She has a new hero, or rather two, one Mr. Satterthwaite, an amiable onlooker at life, and one Harley Quin, a mysterious figure who appears and disappears at odd seasons, and whose function is so to sharpen the wits of Mr. Satterthwaite that he suddenly 'sees' the significant facts in what had before appeared unintelligible mystery. In the first few stories of the book this idea is happily exploited; Mr. Satterthwaite does arrive at the truth by simply gazing at the circumstances with new eyes and seeing what they tell him. But the inspiration does not hold out, and in the later episodes neither Mr. Harley Quin nor his medium have any particular significance. The conversation and the settings, also, are highbrow in comparison with Conan Doyle'sthough not offensively highbrow.

Mr. H. C. Bailey's Reginald Fortune ought to be a saga-figure by now. Mr. Fortune Explains (Ward Lock.

7s. 6d.) is at least his sixth appearance. His claim to individuality rests largely upon his conversation, which is certainly unmistakable. 'My dear chap. Oh, my dear chap,' he says; and 'Yes. Yes. It could be'; and half a dozen other phrases. It is more of a mannerism, like a stammer, than a genuine style; but it is clear enough. And his appearance and his habits must now be fairly well known. The only thing against him is that he is not very good at detection, and his creator, in order to help him out, is reduced to tangling up his plots in an impossible manner, so that the reader is bewildered simply by the fact that the story is told all the wrong way round. Mr. Fortune's explanations, where they are credible, which is not always, consist in following a thread through the conversations of persons who are deliberately made to converse unintelligibly. For those who already know and like Mr. Fortune, this collection is middling. The best story in it is that called 'The Football Photograph'. But I think myself that Mr. Fortune is wearing a little thin.

Joe Jenkins, whom Paul Rosenhayn chronicles in Joe Jenkins's Case-Book (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.), is a detective without any character at all. I rather gather that this book (which is a translation) is not his first appearance, though I have not met him before. But I should certainly not know him again; the only characteristic he appears to possess is ubiquity. I never knew a detective who was able to tear about with such rapidity. One or two of the stories in this book are not bad, and might reasonably appear in magazine form; but on the whole they are without distinction and some of them unnecessarily improbable.

The advantage of having a recognizable detective, of any kind, however, is very clearly seen in the volume

called The Best Detective Stories of the Year 1929 (Faber & Faber). Most of the stories in this book contain some detection; and several of them are good. One may mention, for example, H. M. Richardson's The Man Who Made Rings, Grenville Robbins's The Broadcast Murder, and Will Scott's Clues, all of which contain really good ideas. But taken as a whole, the collection is wearisome to read through, and that not only because it includes gems of English like: 'Being practically stagnant water, you will notice that there are two distinct varieties of leaves attached to the stalk'. It is the lack of personality in the detectives which accounts for the flatness; there is no room, as I have said before, in a story of magazine length to get in both plot and character, and one or other must go, unless the detective is a saga-figure who can provide the illusion of character in himself. The one story in which Hercule Poirot appears, though not an especially good one, comes like water in a thirsty land. I notice, by the way, that Mr. Berkeley appears to have here anticipated a suggestion of mine by re-writing one of his novels as a short story. It is quite a good story—but it was a much better novel.

Medieval Latin Lyrics, by Helen Waddell. (Constable. 21s.) Here at last is the anthology of medieval Latin verse with English versions promised by Miss Waddell in 1926, when she published her Wandering Scholars and proved that the so-called Dark Ages had an illumination of their own, and a classical tradition which has been unfairly eclipsed by the brilliance of the Renaissance. The poems she has chosen are as lovely as we had expected; some, indeed, are surprisingly lovely, Ausonius's 'De Rosis Nascentibus,' for example, and Abelard's lament for Jonathan. To criticize

Miss Waddell's selection would require a knowledge of those early centuries as deep and detailed as her own, a distinction which comparatively few can boast. And then she disarms criticism in her Introduction, where she admits that when she has omitted what all might expect to find, it is because her powers of translation have failed her. More than that, in making this selection she had a two-fold intention: to show what poetry was still being drawn out of the Latin tongue when the world of Virgil and Catullus had gone for ever, and also to trace the classical tradition that these first poets of the modern world preserved. To achieve this latter aim, she has gone back to the Virgilian 'Copa' (or 'Dancing Girl of Syria') and the lyrics of Petronius Arbiter. In making a book of reasonable proportions, something must be sacrificed; Miss Waddell has wisely chosen to indicate the whole scope of the forest, even when it meant lopping out a noble tree here and there.

In like manner she has forestalled criticism of her translation as translations. 'To those born,' she writes, 'with this kind of restlessness, this curiosity to transmute the beauty of one language into another . . . a great phrase in the Latin, something familiar in the landscape, some touch of almost contemporary desire or pain, may awaken the re-creative trouble . . . In this minor art also, the wind blows where it lists.'

In truth, the wind of her inspiration blows very freely, with a freedom that Ernest Dowson translating Verlaine or Baudelaire translating Poe never permitted themselves. What she offers is twentieth-century variations on themes that date from the first century to the twelfth. The method is permissible, and, in Miss Waddell's hands, often successful. But when her version is printed face to

face with the original and read in conjunction with it, one is apt to see only how much she has missed or altered. If you have no Latin, the right-hand pages of this book will give you a tuneful and adequate, if somewhat sweetened, idea of what medieval poetry was. If you ignore the English, the left-hand pages of this same volume will be a lasting joy. But there is a gulf between. However good her lyrics, and she has a real sense of rhythm and language, they are too remote in spirit from the sources of their inspiration.

For example, the facile movement of her rendering of

Abelard's 'Planctus,' especially this verse:

So share thy victory, Or else thy grave,

Either to rescue thee, or with thee lie:

Ending that life for thee,

That thou didst save,

So Death that sundereth might bring more nigh.

has nothing in common with the restrained measure and close-knit, almost tortured, Latin of this, the original:

Vicem amicitiae
vel unam me reddere
oportebat tempore
summae tunc angustiae,
triumphi participem
vel ruinae comitem,
ut te vel eriperem
vel tecum occumberem
vitam pro te finiens
quam salvasti totiens,
ut et mors nos iungeret
magis quam disiungeret. . . .



Again, she prints a thoroughly pagan love-lyric of Petronius:

Qualis nox fuit illa, di deaeque, quam mollis torus. Haesimus calentes et transfudimus hinc et hinc labellis errantes animas. Valete, curae mortales.

That, I imagine, is what Mr. D. H. Lawrence would have called a 'sound love-lyric', written in the full satisfaction of a perfect *nuit de noces*. In Miss Waddell's hands it becomes a mournful cry, heavy with the *lacrimae rerum* that Petronius dismisses in his closing lines:

Ah God, ah God, the night when we two clung So close, our hungry lips Transfused each into each our hovering souls, Mortality's eclipse!

Perhaps her worst offence against the spirit of the poets she would introduce to us occurs in the 'Copa'. Not the mistranslation on page two ('Fierce with his sickle and enormous belly' for 'sed non et vasto est inguine terribilis'), but on the following page where she transposes for the poet's emotion the emotion which a reference of his to a donkey arouses in herself. The Roman attitude to animals was generally sensible, if sometimes callous: what the Latin says is 'Your little donkey is tired and sweating, spare him (for) the donkey is dear to Vesta'. But that is enough to arouse in Miss Waddell the purely modern reaction of affectionate and humorous humanitarianism:

Hither, O pilgrim! See, the little donkey Is tired and wistful. Spare the little donkey! Did not a goddess love a little donkey? Such falsification of the psychology of her originals must inevitably lessen the value of her book, however skilful and, at times, charming her lyrics may be in themselves. And this is the more to be regretted because Miss Waddell has an exhaustive knowledge of medieval Latin literature, and that literature deserves the recognition she would gain for it. No one for whom medieval Latin has any appeal can afford to ignore this anthology; but most who know and love Latin will wish the book had been arranged, not in the method so excellently suited to the Loeb Classical Library, but with the Latin poems together first, and after them, for such as need a little help (but would they find it?) and admire her muse, Miss Waddell's flights of fancy. Her biographical notes are excellent, and reveal again the fullness of her knowledge.

The Comedies, Incognita and Poems of Congreve. Edited by F. W. Bateson. (Peter Davies. 7s. 6d.) Congreve's plays, in spite of their style, are essentially stage plays; they seem, as one reads them, dancing with impatience to be on the boards. The melodramatic episodes, their worst flaw, would be far better acted; the liveliness and bustle even of an indifferent performance would improve them, and good acting might make them positively effective. And Congreve's best things have nothing to lose by it; perfect in manner as they are, they have no echoes to be dispersed by a performance; indeed, the varying of the rhythm with each speaker, which Mr. Bateson points out, gives an irresistible impression of life, which, delightful as it is in itself, suggests and insistently demands an incarnation, an actual, visible, audible Brisk, or Witwoud, or Millamant. How much more tolerable would be the exposure of Maskwell and Lady Touchwood on the stage; with how admirable a pertinence would come Brisk's compensating comment: 'This is all very surprising, let me perish'. One would like to see, at any rate, the three later comedies reappearing continually. But when one reads them—and they would be read, in that case, the oftener—one should read them at the most perfect leisure.

The Private Letter-Books of Sir Walter Scott, edited by Wilfred Partington. (Hodder & Stoughton. 30s.) This Abbotsford Correspondence, 6,000 letters in all, is the property of Mr. Hugh Walpole, who writes an Introductory Letter. which makes the Scott lover fairly gasp with astonishment and envy. It seems that during the War years a Times advertisement that the Correspondence would be on sale at Sotheby's caught Mr. Walpole's eye. Without much hope, since the Letter-books contained letters from men such as Byron, Wordsworth, Hogg, Lamb, Goethe. Lockhart, he attended the auction, and found himself bidding against a solitary fellow-enthusiast. If he inadvertently gives the impression that he acquired the whole bulky twenty-three volumes for a shilling, Mr. Wilfred Partington, who has admirably sifted the collection and picked out the plums, with garniture to the dish in the shape of short explanatory papers and excellent footnotes, lets us into the real secret. Still, £1,500 was a cheap enough bargain, and we do not wonder that Mr. Walpole has been besieged (unsuccessfully, it is hardly needful to say) with tempting offers since. 'Scott was the friend of all the world, and everybody wanted to write to him'; and did. He kept their letters, of very varying worth, of course, and he answered them with that inexhaustible energy and freshness of his, and one day he and his amanuensis, Huntly Gordon, set to work to bind up the

sheaves. So here they are, though it is almost uncanny to have a fresh harvest-home from the 'Wizard of the North'. How on earth, amid a hundred other occupations, did brain and hand and pen keep up their untiring output? And then comes the almost hopeless task of the Reader. Well, Mr. Partington has achieved exceedingly well what Mr. Walpole wished him to bring out as salient features of the Letters. In the first place, there is the colour of the period, and that will strike every reader. It is a sort of haphazardness of interest in things great and things small. Everybody seemed interested in everything, especially the matters near at hand. Europe, at bay against the greatest military genius of all times, was comfortably distant from the ordinary happenings of the Border, the Lakes, and 'Auld Reekie'. The second thing that the collection conveys—for these are letters written not by himself, but by other men and women-is the 'wide generosity and nobility of Sir Walter himself'. A certain celebrated Essay of Hazlitt comes to mind, and then there are these Letters to set beside it. It is not the Essay which wins the day. It is impossible to start quoting; and, indeed, not everything in Mr. Partington's selection is worth very special atention. But there are passages enough to fill up many a gap in Lockhart's great Life, and more than enough to confirm the affection and trust of such as Laidlaw and Purdie, and the awed inquiry of the working-men outside the sickroom in Jermyn Street of which Allan Cunningham tells.

Is Sex Necessary?, by James Thurber and E. B. White. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.) Is sex necessary? This is a title—not a qualm—but a joke. As the authors, Thurber and White, say: 'Our method was the opposite to that used by other

writers on sex. . . . They clearly hadn't been out much. They had been home, writing: and meanwhile, what was sex doing? Not standing still, you can better believe.' It has had a raging sale in America.

It is illustrated with odd drawings, and it is laid out in the best manner, case-reports and all, on the lines of the Viennese. Whenever an authority is needed, why, they find one, or often two. There is even a glossary so exhaustive as to contain unlikely words, such as 'empiric', which is defined as 'national viewpoint on sex'.

This is a special type of humour found on the eastern side of the States, corresponding to the 'too, too shymaking' school over here, but much more alive. It is exemplified in Anita Loos' McEvoy's Show Girl, in that periodical, The New Yorker. It is time that someone wrote a monograph on the subject. These works are more than amusing: for the intelligent reader, they are sociological documents, more revealing than all the native realistic novels, and all the European week-enders' treatises on America.

The analysis of the recessive knee in connection with male frigidity is a valuable contribution to this vexed subject; but I cannot go so far as to agree with the authors in their definition of six-day bicycle racing as a sex substitute—there is also the economic factor.

To conclude with a typical acute observation: 'There has never been a case of a young lady telling her mother that she wanted to go to New York because she was seeking an outlet for her erotic eagerness. It was always concerts that she wanted. It was often concerts that she got.' The volume of research conducted by Thurber and White is immense. They seemed to have stopped at nothing in their scientific zeal.

Indiscretions of a Prefect of Police. Intimate Memories of Napoleon and the Bourbons from the Papers of Count Réal. Translated and edited by Arthur L. Hayward, F.R.Hist.S. (Cassell. 8s. 6d.). These selections are badly edited and badly translated. A little under half of the two volumes of anecdotes which Musnier-Desclozeaux, the French editor, had collected, has been dropped. Much of this matter is no doubt of little interest to the public which Mr. Hayward desires to reach, but he should not have allowed motives of prudery to prevent him from republishing the two admirable stories entitled Une confession and La maîtresse du prétendant.

The introduction assumes Count Réal to have been the author of this book; hence its title. Musnier-Desclozeaux made no such claim. The chapter on the Hundred Days was based on a manuscript which Kellerman, Duc de Valmy, had written in 1818 in reply to General Gourgaud. (Two paragraphs on pages 163-4 are a direct quotation and should have been placed in inverted commas.) The story about Lekain, the actor, came from Talma. If Réal was the source of many of the other stories, they are reported from recollection by Musnier-Desclozeaux. There is no evidence that they are based on 'gleanings from Réal's memory', jotted down after he had burnt his memoirs proper. These are facts which have been known to all who cared to read ever since the first edition preface was published in 1835. They should have been stated. Asitstands, the title of the book is most misleading, if not actually false.

A comparison between original and translation has astounded your reporter. 'Rouer' does not mean 'to put on the rack' (p. 32). 'Attributions' does not mean 'fortune' (p. 160). Peyronnet did not say 'I will just leave my

trousers hanging over the chair' (p. 236), but 'Je laisse ici ma pantoufle'! Mr. Hayward should have obtained

the services of a competent translator.

That the book remains extremely readable is a tribute to Musnier-Desclozeaux. Strongly Bonapartist, he was at few pains to criticize partisan accounts of such shady affairs as the Cadoudal plot and the condemnation of Moreau. He at least knew how to remember and how to write.

... & Co., by Jean-Richard Bloch (Victor Gollancz. 8s. 6d.), is on a grand scale, written with command and certainty, and self-concealing technique. It treats of both individuals and entities larger than individuals. It accurately preserves the balance between them. Bloch's ideas are not clever: they are sound. He attains astonishingly diverse ends without the employment of any literary tricks, so that, as you read, you are astonished at how much is being conveyed, insidiously as it were.

I feel that I have had a lifelong acquaintance with the principal characters, the Simlers, a family of Alsatian Jews-weavers, driven out by the German occupation of 1870, setting up a little factory in Vendeuvre, conquering and growing, and then finally being conquered by their own creation. All the other people too, however slightly drawn, live vividly. Figures are more than outlined and shaped: they exist, solid. Only in the one important woman character does Bloch fail to be completely convincing: the inner workings of her mind are not traced with the same luminous accuracy as the others. Perhaps largely because the standard of reality set by other characters is so high.

It is difficult to analyse the style of . . . & Co. One gets the impression that the author is master of other idioms, that he expresses himself here in this manner because it suits the subject-matter, and that in other works he would use other manners. There is something about the style that is native to the period: yet, at the same time, the angle of vision and the use of words are thoroughly modern in the best sense of the word. Bloch has been amazingly successful in the manner which he shows his characters through each other's eyes, so that the reader can derive quite separate ideas about them, agreeing here or differing there with the opinions of the author about them.

At times the book is lifted into another key, the Simlers and commerce are abandoned, and the matter is purely descriptive or atmospheric.

The translation is by Scott-Moncrieff, and is of his usual excellence. . . . & Co. is to be judged by rigorous standards because it sets high ones. Granted this, I will say that it falls short of perfection. There are a few books which, as soon as one begins to read, rouse an enormous sense of anticipation. Soon, one feels, perhaps on the next page, something positively superb is going to take place; so far this is wonderful, in a moment the author will really show us his best and it will be colossal. Sometimes the miracle occurs and it is colossal. Then one can say: this is a work of genius, superlatives are justified. Here, I felt all the time, even to the penultimate page, the miracle will happen, but it never quite did. However, one day Bloch will bring it about.

Kindness in a Corner, by T. F. Powys. (Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.) I have quite a separate and special kind of admiration for this author's work, though it is comprehensible to me that there are persons who are unable to enjoy it.

Powys creates a world of his own. His books are not

different novels, they are part of a whole, each illuminating a different aspect or section of his world. Kindness in a Corner is more lighthearted and less concerned with kindly, brooding, supernatural figures than most of its predecessors. Here, one is transported into a kind of Biblical modernity. There are motor-cars in the village of Tadnol, but they are very incidental motor-cars: they come and they go without being in the least incongruous, and it is as if they had never been. Tadnol and its inhabitants are permanent. Stage-coaches, pack-horses, or aeroplanes might have been equally well the mode for transit. This book would have been the same book. Somehow, Powys manages to write pure fantasy and at the same time create living people and atmospheres. I have seldom come across more delightful characters than Mr. Dottery, the hero, the rector of Tadnol, or Truggin, the grave-digger who loves his graves, his garden of corpses, honours the worm, and thinks Death a fine friend to all men.

Sometimes this book is really Biblical, sometimes it has a medieval gravity. Its humour is timeless folk-humour. There is a lovely joke running all through. You see, there are twin sisters, Nellie and Betty, identical to the eye. Once they got mixed up and no one since then has known which is which. But Tommy Toole has discovered an invisible difference. Wherever Nellie and Betty go, Tommy has to follow in case anyone needs to distinguish them. Tommy is an empiricist.

I like this book. It is a good, friendly, cheering book.

Copse 125, by Ernst Junger. (Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.) From a literary standpoint, Copse 125 is quite unnecessary. It says three things that could be put in two thousand

words: it says them over and over again in almost the same words, not very good words—that the soldier is the best of mankind, that war is ennobling, and that it is necessary, not merely unavoidable.

Although I am certain that Junger did not intend this, the only point of interest about his book is the portrait of the author that emerges. One finishes the book with an impression of one of those strong silent persons, utterly humourless, curiously fervid about everything, full of noble qualities—and yet, one feels, God help his poor wife and children, he would mean so well by them.

I have not read *The Storm of Steel*, his previous work, but I gather that it is not very different except that, judged from the publisher's announcement, *Copse 125* 

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'contains more reflection on the philosophy of war'. It is an odd kind of philosophy. Also, we are told, the book 'is an epic of action, endurance, and courage'. I fail to see this. A greater part is concerned with reflections on the nobility of being noble and how noble it is to slaughter or be slaughtered for my country, right or wrong, especially if one manages not to be killed oneself.

Herr Junger thinks war a lovely business. He has ideas about it. He says that the high ideals animating the soldiery are what is important in civilization, as opposed to mere economic factors. He also says that war is the only way in which a country can prove its right to an economic success. He says that, after all, it is the heart and feeling that matters, not thought or reason. He loathes intellectual activity. Curiously enough, though, show him a machine or a wireless set and he is full of crude wonder at the marvels of modern science. But to give him his due, there are parts of the book that are interesting as portraying the professional soldier mind, the man with a positively Roman outlook. Only Herr Junger is altogether too articulate and glib about it. (See the works of Julius Caesar.)

It was inevitable that after the recent deluge of books in which people came to the conclusion that wars should be discouraged as wasteful and brutal, someone should suggest the reverse. But surely there must be better reasons than these, and better writers to suggest them! The translation is competent.

The Broomscod Collar, by Gillian Olivier. (Heinemann. 8s. 6d.) This is a curious tale, dealing with the most curious of all the Kings of England. Only one man has really succeeded in an analysis—his own analysis, at all

events—of the baffling and fascinating personality of Richard II, and that man is Shakespeare. And not the least compelling quality of his play, in which he makes Richard, as Pater observed, talk more exquisitely than any other of his characters, is that Shakespeare is obviously fascinated himself. Then Sir Henry Newbolt, in his The New June, got very near to the man, with his sudden fits of genius, his self-deceptive theatricality, his religiousness, his love of beautiful things, art and jewellery, and the like. And Sir Henry gave us the Hollands, and Gloucester, and Henry of Derby, as well as one finely described tournament, with the bad tinsel glinting through the decaying chivalry. But his book got tangled up into rather tired history at the last, and no wonder, with that strange Court of 'dukelings' and lords and their feuds. Now comes Miss Olivier to put things straight, and we are

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bound to say that she fails. Medieval people did not talk, of course, in Scott's or Lytton's, or Newbolt's way, though we are bound to say that something like Lytton's not always ineffective bombast would have matched the fantastic costumes of the fourteenth century. The one form of speech inconceivably alien from all we know of Richard is such modern slang, and sometimes poor slang at that, which Miss Olivier thinks may make matters clear for us. We are told that it is going to be used, so things are fair enough; we are also told that light will be thrown on Richard's unpopular peace policy with France. But we knew all that already. Richard's hold on Wales and the attraction Ireland had for him-how like to the later ill-starred Stuarts!—are missed out; so is the amazing raid on Pleshy, though Gloucester probably deserved what he got, and the insane seizure of the great Lancaster estates. This is, of course, mentioned; but no comment is made on the sudden failure of intellect, to put it no higher, which turned a gifted and forcible ruler into a common thief, and then, when every faculty would be tasked to the utmost in England, sent him on a wildgoose chase into Ireland. Stubbs thinks that actual insanity may have at times assailed a brilliant but unstable brain; Shakespeare hints that something very queer was at work. Miss Olivier has been at pains with her study; but neither her Richard nor her Henry convinces us in the least: the wearing of the English crown is beyond the reach of either. And her conversational way of telling the story is perplexity itself at times; who is speaking, and especially which John out of several, becomes a maze. It is a pity; for we really want to know about Richard, in his strength and in his weakness, and nobody—not even Shakespeare himself, who only worked at a mystery after his own heart—can quite tell us.

# LIFE AND LETTERS

#### ANTONIA WHITE

### THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS

[ The House of Clouds is a 'document'. It has psychological as well as literary value and a certain beauty; for it is as clear a record of 'fantasies' and emotions during temporary insanity as the patient could make after recovery. One of the marks of abnormal experience of this kind seems to be a loss of the sense of time. She dies perpetually and is reborn; sometimes as an animal, sometimes as another human being in some terrible predicament, a phantasmagoric shadow thrown by some painful reality. She lives through life-times. Hours or minutes are either lengthened into years, or weeks are compressed into moments. Sometimes, she says, 'it would take a whole day to lift a spoon to her mouth; at other times she would live at such a pace that she could see the leaves of the ivy on the garden wall positively opening and growing before her eyes.' Such derangement of the perception of time makes it extremely difficult to recall what has been experienced, in terms which convey its actuality. In this case all that the writer describes happened to her during ten months.

Normal people under anæsthetics experience something like this. An incommensurability between the content of sensation and the time it takes to feel it, seems to me the essence of the anæsthetized condition. Once out of curiosity I determined to keep my awareness of sensation during an operation, or at any rate, should that be impossible, to watch the commencement of the processs which was

preventing me from feeling 'pain'. In the midst of that thundering, whirling congregation of elements into which one is transported, and from which self and body from instant to instant become less and less distinguishable, I clung to my awareness of a little pattern in it which was myself, my body. I succeeded long enough to divine, I thought, what the anæsthetic was doing to me. Yes, I certainly continued to feel something, something, too, that belonged to me, though I could not call it anything as definite as pain. Eureka! (Anæsthetized patients, I know, are subject to these revelations, but mine was not mystical; I was set upon satisfying a particular curiosity.) Eureka! The last glimmer of consciousness revealed, or seemed to reveal, to me the process. 'That's not fair,' I cried to this antagonist which was taking consciousness from me. 'How can I know what I'm feeling if you put huge stretches of time in between each minim of sensation? Of course, I forget what the last minim was like; of course I can't add them up to make something coherent enough to recognize as "pain". My memory is only human. How can I recall what I felt so long ago? You are monkeying with my sense of time.' Much as I distrust the validity of perceptions arrived at under the influence of drugs, there seems to me some plausibility in this analysis of what happens to consciousness under general anæsthetics; that pain is not felt because the discrete moments of it are spread out over such a vast space of time (time, that is to say, as it is experienced by the patient), that any sensation becomes unrecognizable as such; just as butter loses its flavour if spread over too large a slice of bread, or a drop of blood its identity under the microscope; and that when the gaps between each minimum of sensation become even wider and memory absolutely fails to bridge them, what we call 'consciousness' ceases completely.

How far psychologists are agreed in their estimates of the extent to which memory of the content of each preceding instant enters into a moment of consciousness, I do not know, but intro-

spection suggests that memory is essential to anything approaching complete consciousness. It would be a rather startling corollary that certain forms of insanity, as far as their mental aspect was concerned, could be ascribed to a derangement in the sufferer's perception of time, he or she living in a world in which impressions were so widely separated that previous ones were forgotten or only vaguely remembered. It is, after all, only recollection of a preceding impression which enables us to distinguish any object from any momentary apprehension of it which is coloured by our emotional state at that moment. Normal consciousness swarms with delusions which only fail to affect us because they are so evanescent as to be hardly felt. It is, of course, doubtful whether such a line of analysis is sound, but insanity is certainly often, as it was in the case of the heroine of The House of Clouds, accompanied by a derangement in the patient's sense of time. I mention it as an example of the kind of speculations which this touching and vivid 'document', apart from its human interest, may start in those interested in psychology.—Editor.]

The night before, Helen had tried to drown herself. She did not know why, for she had been perfectly happy. The four of them, she and Robert and Dorothy and Louis, had been getting supper. Louis had been carrying on one of his interminable religious arguments, and she remembered trying to explain to him the difference between the Virgin Birth and the Immaculate Conception as she carried plates out of the kitchen. And then, suddenly, she had felt extraordinarily tired and had gone out into the little damp courtyard and out through the gate into the passage that led to the Thames. She wasn't very clear about what happened next. She remembered that Robert had carried her back to Dorothy's room and had laid her on the bed and knelt beside her for a long time while

neither of them spoke. And then they had gone back into the comfortable noise and warmth of Louis's studio next door, and the others had gone on getting supper exactly as if nothing had happened. Helen had sat by the fire, feeling a little sleepy and remote, but amazingly happy. She had not wanted any supper, only a little bread and salt. She was insistent about the salt because salt keeps away evil spirits, and they had given it to her quietly without any fuss. They were gentle with her, almost reverent. She felt they understood that something wonderful was going to happen to her. She would let no one touch her, not Robert even. It was as if she were being charged with some force, fiery and beautiful, but so dangerous that a touch would explode it.

She did not remember how she got home. But to-day had been quite normal, till at dinner-time this strong impulse had come over her that she must go to Dorothy's, and here, after walking for miles in the fog, she was. She was lying in Dorothy's bed. There was a fire in the room, but it could not warm her. She kept getting up and wandering over to the door and looking out into the foggy courtyard. Over and over again, gently and patiently, as if she were a child, Dorothy had put her back to bed again. But she could not sleep. Sometimes she was in sharp pain; sometimes she was happy. She could hear herself singing over and over again, like an incantation:

O Deus, ego amo te Nec amo te ut salves me Nec quia non amantes te Aeterno punis igne.

The priest who had married her appeared by her bed. She thought he was his own ghost come to give her the last sacraments and that he had died at that very moment in India. He twisted his rosary round her wrist. A doctor came too; the Irish doctor she hated. He tried to give her an injection, but she fought him wildly. She had promised someone (was it Robert?) that she would not let them give her drugs. Drugs would spoil the sharpness of this amazing experience that was just going to break into flower. But in spite of her fighting, she felt the prick of the needle in her arm, and sobbing and struggling still, she felt the thick wave of the drug go over her. Was it morphia? Morphia, a word she loved to say, lengthening the first syllable that sounded like the note of a horn. 'Morphia, mo-orphia, put an "M" on my forehead', she moaned in a man's voice.

Morning came. She felt sick and mortally tired. The doctor was there still; her father, in a brown habit, like a monk, sat talking to him. Her father came over to the bed to kiss her, but a real physical dislike of him choked her, and she pushed him away. She knew, without hearing, what he and the doctor had been talking about. They were going to take her away to use her as an experiment. Something about the war. She was willing to go; but when they lifted her out of bed she cried desperately, over and over again, for Robert.

She was in a cab, with her head on a nurse's shoulder. Her father and two other men were there. It seemed odd to be driving through South Kensington streets in broad daylight, dressed only in one of Dorothy's nightgowns and an old army overcoat of Robert's. They came to a tall house. Someone, Louis perhaps, carried her up flights and flights of steps. Now she was in a perfectly ordinary bedroom. An old nurse with a face she liked sat by the fire; a young one, very pink and white and self-conscious,

stood near her. Helen wandered over to the window and looked out. There went a red bus, normal and reassuring. Suddenly the young nurse was at her elbow, leading her away from the window.

'I shouldn't look out of the window if I were you, dear', she said in a soft hateful voice. 'It's so ugly.' Helen let herself be led away. She was puzzled and frightened; she wanted to explain something, but she was tired and muddled; she could not speak. Presently she was in bed, alone but for the old nurse. The rosary was still on her wrist. She felt that her parents were downstairs, praying for her. Her throat was dry; a fearful weariness weighed her down. She was in her last agony. She must pray. As if the old nurse understood, she began the 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary'. Helen answered. Decade after decade they recited in a mechanical rhythm. There were cold beads on Helen's forehead and all her limbs felt bruised. Her strength was going out of her on the holy words. She was fighting the overpowering sleepiness that she knew was death. 'Holy Mary, Mother of God', she forced out in beat after beat of sheer will-power. She lapsed at last. She was dead, but unable to leave the flesh. She waited, light, happy, disembodied.

And now she was a small child again and the nurse was the old Nanny at the house in Worcestershire. She lay very peacefully watching the nurse at her knitting under the green lamp. Pleasant thoughts went through her head of the red-walled kitchen garden, of the frost on the rosemary tufts, of the firelight dancing in the wintry panes before the curtains were drawn. Life would begin again here, a new life perfected day by day through a new childhood, safe and warm and orderly as this old house that smelt of pines and beeswax. But the nightmares soon

began. She was alone in a crypt watching by the coffin of a dead girl, an idiot who had died at school and who lay in a glass-topped coffin in her First Communion dress, with a gilt paper crown on her head. Helen woke up and screamed.

Another nurse was sitting by the green lamp.

'You must be quiet, dear', said the nurse.

There were whispers and footsteps outside.

'I hear she is wonderful', said a woman's voice.

'Yes', said another, 'but all the conditions must be right or it will be dangerous for her.'

'How?'

'You must all dress as nurses', said the second voice, 'then she thinks she is in a hospital. She lives all through it again, or rather, they do.'

'Who . . . the sons?'

'Yes. The House of Clouds is full of them.'

One by one, women wearing nurses' veils and aprons tiptoed in an sat beside her bed. She knew quite well that they were not nurses; she even recognized faces she had seen in picture papers. These were rich women whose sons had been killed, years ago, in the war. And each times a woman came in, Helen went through a new agony. She became the dead boy. She spoke with his voice. She felt the pain of amputated limbs, of blinded eyes. She coughed up blood from lungs torn to rags by shrapnel. Over and over again, in trenches, in field hospitals, in German camps, she died a lingering death. Between the bouts of torture, the mothers, in their nurses's veils, would kiss her hands and sob out their gratitude.

'She must never speak of the House of Clouds', one said to another.

And the other answered:

'She will forget when she wakes up. She is going to marry a soldier.'

Months, perhaps years, later, she woke up in a small bare cell. The walls were whitewashed and dirty, and she was lying on a mattress on the floor, without sheets, with only rough, red-striped blankets over her. She was wearing a linen gown, like an old-fashioned nightshirt, and she was bitterly cold. In front of her was the blank yellow face of a heavy door without a handle of any kind. Going over to the door, she tried frantically to push it open. It was locked. She began to call out in panic and to beat on the door till her hands were red and swollen. She had forgotten her name. She did not know whether she were very young or very old; a man or a woman. Had she died that night in Dorothy's studio? She could remember Dorothy and Robert, yet she knew that her memory of them was not quite right. Was this place a prison? If only, only her name would come back to her.

Suddenly the door opened. A young nurse was there, a nurse with a new face. As suddenly as the door had opened, Helen's own identity flashed up again. She called wildly: 'I know who I am. I'm Helen Ryder. You must ring up my father and tell him I'm here. I must have lost my memory. The number is Western 2159.'

The nurse did not answer, but she began to laugh. Slowly, mockingly, inch by inch, though Helen tried with all her strength to keep it open, she closed the door.

The darkness and the nightmare came back. She lost herself again; this time completely. For years she was not even a human being; she was a horse. Ridden almost to death, beaten till she fell, she lay at last on the straw in her stable and waited for death. They buried her as she lay on her side, with outstretched head and legs. A child

came and sowed turquoises round the outline of her body in the ground, and she rose up again as a horse of magic with a golden mane, and galloped across the sky. Again she woke on the mattress in her cell. She looked and saw that she had human hands and feet again, but she knew she was still a horse. Nurses came and dragged her, one on each side, to an enormous room filled with baths. They dipped her into bath after bath of boiling water. Each bath was smaller than the last, with gold taps that came off in her hands when she tried to clutch them. There was something slightly wrong about everything in this strange bathroom. All the mugs were chipped. The chairs had only three legs. There were plates lying about with letters round the brim, but the letters never read the same twice running. The nurses looked like human beings, but Helen knew quite well that they were only wax dolls stuffed with hay.

They could torture her for all that. After the hot baths, they ducked her, spluttering and choking, into an icecold one. A nurse took a bucket of cold water and splashed it over her, drenching her hair and half blinding her. She screamed, and nurses, dozens of them, crowded round the bath to laugh at her. 'Oh Nelly, you naughty, naughty girl', they giggled. They took her out and dried her and rubbed something on her eyes and nostrils that stung like fire. She had human limbs, but she was not human; she was a horse or a stag being prepared for the hunt. On the

wall was a looking-glass, dim with steam.

'Look, Nelly, look who's there', said the nurses.

She looked and saw a face in the glass, the face of a fairy horse or stag, sometimes with antlers, sometimes with a wild golden mane, but always with the same dark stony eyes and nostrils red as blood. She threw up her head and neighed and made a dash for the door. The nurses caught and dragged her along a passage. The passage was like a long room; it had a shiny wooden floor with double iron tracks in it like the tracks of a model railway. The nurses held her painfully by the armpits so that her feet only brushed the floor. The passage was like a musty old museum. There were wax flowers under cases and engravings of Queen Victoria and Balmoral. Suddenly the nurses opened a door in the wall, and there was her cell again. They threw her down on the mattress and went out, locking the door.

She went to sleep. She had a long nightmare about a girl who was lost in the dungeons under an old house on her wedding-day. Just as she was, in her white dress and wreath and veil, she fell into a trance and slept for thirty years. She woke up, thinking she had slept only a few hours, and found her way back to the house, and remembering her wedding, hurried to the chapel. There were lights and flowers and a young man standing at the altar. But as she walked up the aisle, people pushed her back, and she saw another bride going up before her. Up in her own room, she looked in the glass to see an old woman in a dirty satin dress with a dusty wreath on her head. And somehow, Helen herself was the girl who had slept thirty years, and they had shut her up here in the cell without a looking-glass so that she should not know how old she had grown.

And then again she was Robert, endlessly climbing up the steps of a dark tower by the sea, knowing that she herself was imprisoned at the top. She came out of this dream suddenly to find herself being tortured as a human being. She was lying on her back with two nurses holding her down. A young man with a signet ring on his finger

was bending over her, holding a funnel with a long tube attached. He forced the tube down her nose and began to pour some liquid down her throat. There was a searing pain at the back of her nose, she choked and struggled, but they held her down ruthlessly. At last the man drew out the tube and dropped it coiling in a basin. The nurses released her and all three went out and shut the door.

This horror came at intervals for days. She grew to dread the opening of the door, which was nearly always followed by the procession of the nurses and the man with the basin and the funnel. Gradually she became a little more aware of her surroundings. She was no longer lying on the floor, but in a sort of wooden manger clamped to the ground in the middle of a cell. Now she had not even a blanket, only a kind of stiff canvas apron, like a piece of sailcloth, stretched over her. And she was wearing, not a shirt, but a curious enveloping garment, very stiff and rough, that encased her legs and feet and came down over her hands. It had a leather collar, like an animal's, and a belt with a metal ring. Between the visitations of the funnel, she dozed and dreamt. Or she would lie quietly, quite happy to watch hour after hour, the play of pearly colours on the piece of sailcoth. Her name had irrevocably gone, but whole pieces of her past life, people, episodes, poems, remained embedded in her mind. She could remember the whole of 'The Mistress of Vision' and say it over to herself as she lay there. But if a word had gone, she could not suggest another to fill the gap, unless it was one of those odd meaningless words that she found herself making up now and then.

One night there was a thunderstorm. She was frightened. The manger had become a little raft; when she put out her hand she could feel waves lapping right up to the brim. She had always been afraid of water in the dark. Now she began to pray. The door opened and a nurse, with a red face and pale hair and lashes, peered round the door, and called to her:

'Rosa Mystica.'

Helen called back:

'Turris Davidica.'

'Turris Eburnea,' called the nurse.

'Domus Aurea,' cried Helen.

And so, turn by turn, they recited the whole of the

Litany of Our Lady.

One day she discovered that, by standing up in the manger, she could see through a high window, covered with close wire-netting, out into a garden. This discovery gave her great pleasure. In the garden women and nurses were walking; they did not look like real people, but oddly thin and bright, like figures cut out of coloured paper. And she could see birds flying across the sky, not real birds, but bird-shaped kites, lines with strips of white metal that flew on wires. Only the clouds had thickness and depth and looked as clouds had looked in the other world. The clouds spoke to her sometimes. They wrote messages in white smoke on the blue. They would take shape after shape to amuse her, shapes of swans, of feathers, of charming ladies with fluffy white muffs and toques, of soldiers in white busbies.

Once the door of her cell opened, and there appeared, not a nurse, but a woman with short frizzy hair, who wore a purple jumper, a tweed skirt, and a great many amber beads. Helen at once decided that this woman's name was Stella. She had a friendly, silly face, and an upper lip covered with dark down.

'I've brought you a pencil,' she announced suddenly.

'I think you're so sweet. I've seen you from the garden, often. Shall we be friends?'

But before Helen could answer, the woman threw up her head, giggled, shot Helen an odd, sly look, and disappeared. With a sudden, sharp, quite normal horror, Helen thought 'She's mad'.

She thought of faces she had seen in the garden, with that same sly, shallow look. There must be other people in the place, then. For the first time, she was grateful for the locked door. She had a horror of mad people, of madness. Her own private horror had always been that she would go mad.

She was feeling quiet and reasonable that day. Her name had not come back to her, but she could piece together some shreds of herself. She recognized her hands; they were thinner and the nails were broken, but they were the hands she had had in the life with Dorothy and Robert and the others. She recognized a birthmark on her arm. She felt light and tired, as if she had recovered from a long illness, but sufficiently interested to ask the nurse who came in:

'What is this place?'

The nurse, who was young and pretty, with coppery hair and green eyes, looked at Helen with pity and contempt. She was kindly, with the ineffable stupid kindliness of nurses.

'I'm not supposed to tell you anything, you know.'

'I won't give you away,' promised Helen. 'What is it?'

'Well! it's a hospital, if you must know.'

'But what kind of a hospital?'

'Ah, that'd be telling.'

'What kind of a hospital?' persisted Helen.

'A hospital for girls who ask too many questions and have to give their brains a rest. Now go to sleep.'

She shook a playful finger and retreated.

It was difficult to know when the episode of the rubber room took place. Time and place were very uncertain, ant to remain stationary for months, and they to dissolve and fly in the most bewildering way. Sometimes it would take her a whole day to lift a spoon to her mouth; at other times she would live at such a pace that she could see the leaves of the ivy on the garden wall positively opening and growing before her eyes. The only thing she was sure of was that the rubber room came after she had been changed into a salmon and shut up in a little dry, waterless room behind a waterfall. She lay wriggling and gasping, scraping her scales on the stone floor, maddened by the water pouring just beyond the bars that she could not get through. Perhaps she died as a salmon as she had died as a horse, for the next thing she remembered was waking in a small six-sided room whose walls were all thick bulging panels of grey rubber. The door was rubberpadded too, with a small red window, shaped like an eye, deeply embedded in it. She was lying on the floor, and through the red, a face, stained red, too, was watching her and laughing.

She knew without being told, that the rubber room was a compartment in a sinking ship, near the boiler room which would burst at any minute and scald her to death. Somehow she must get out. She flung herself wildly against the rubber walls as if she could beat her way out by sheer force. The air was getting hotter. The rubber walls were already warm to touch. She was choking, suffocating; in a second her lungs would burst. At last the door opened. They were coming to rescue her.

But it was only the procession of the nurses and the funnel once more.

The fantasies were not always horrible. Once she was in a cell that was dusty and friendly, like an attic. There were spider-webs and an old ship's lamp on the ceiling. In the lamp was a face like a fox's mask, grinning down at her. She was sitting on a heap of straw, a child of eleven or so, with hair the colour of straw, and an old blue pinafore. Her name was Veronica. With crossed legs and folded arms she sat there patiently making a spell to bring her brother Nicholas safe home. He was flying back to her in a white aeroplane with a green propeller. She could see his dark face quite clearly as he sat between the wings. He wore a fur cap like a cossack's and a square green ring on his little finger. Enemies had put Veronica in prison, but Nicholas would come to rescue her as he had always come before. She and Nicholas loved each other with a love far deeper and more subtle than any love between husband and wife. She knew at once if he were in pain or danger, even if he were a thousand miles away.

Nicholas came to her window and carried her away. They flew to Russia, and landed on a plain covered with snow. Then they drove for miles in a sledge until they came to a dark pine forest. They walked through the forest, hand in hand, Veronica held close in Nicholas's great fur cape. But at last she was tired, dazed by the silence and the endless trees, all exactly alike. She wanted to sit down in the snow, to sleep.

Nicholas shook her: 'Never go to sleep in the snow, Ronnie, or you will die.'

But she was too tired to listen, and she lay down in the snow that was soft and strangely warm, and fell into an exquisite dreamy torpor. And perhaps she did die in the snow as Nicholas had said, for the next thing she knew was that she was up in the clouds, following a beautiful Indian woman who sailed before her, and sifting snow down on the world through the holes in her pinafore.

Whenever things became too intolerable, the Indian woman would come with her three dark, beautiful sons, and comfort her. She would draw her sweet-smelling yellow veil over Helen and sing her songs that were like lullabies. Helen could never remember the songs, but she could often feel the Indian woman near when she could not see her, and smell her sweet, musky scent.

She had a strange fantasy that she was Lord of the World. Whatever she ordered came about at once. The walls of the garden outside turned to blue ice that did not melt in the sun. All the doors of the house flew open and the passages were filled with children dressed in white and as lovely as dreams. She called up storms; she drove ships out of their courses; she held the whole world in a spell. Only herself she could not command. When the day came to an end, she was tired out, but she could not sleep. She had forgotten the charm, or never known it, and there was no one powerful enough to say to her, 'Sleep'.

She raved, she prayed, but no sleep came. At last three women appeared.

'You cannot sleep unless you die,' they said.

She assented gladly. The took her to a beach and fettered her down on some stones, just under the bows of a huge ship that was about to be launched. One of the three gave a signal. The great bulk of the ship began to slide towards her. Nothing could stop it now. On it came, grinding the pebbles to dust, deafening her with noise.

It passed, slowly, right over her body. She felt every bone crack; felt the intolerable weight on her shoulders, felt her skull split like a shell. But she could sleep now. She was free from the intolerable burden of having to will.

After this she was born and re-born with incredible swiftness as a woman, as an imp, as a dog, and finally as a flower. She was some nameless, tiny bell, growing in a stream, with a stalk as fine as hair and a human voice. The water flowing through her flower throat made her sing all day a little monotonous song, 'Kulallah, Kulallah'. This happy flower-life did not last long. Soon there came a day when the place was filled with nurses who called her 'Helen'. She did not recognize the name as her own, but she began to answer it mechanically as a dog answers a familiar sound.

She began to put on ordinary clothes, clumsily and with difficulty as if she had only just learned how, and to be taken out for walks in a dreary yard; an asphalt-paved square with one sooty plane tree and a broken bench in the middle. Wearily she would trail round and round between two nurses who polished their nails incessantly as they walked and talked about the dances they had been to. She began to recognize some of her companions in the yard. There was the woman with the beads, the Vitriol woman, and the terrible Caliban girl. The Caliban girl was called Micky. She was tall and rather handsome, but Helen never thought of her except as an animal or a monster and was horrified when Micky tried to utter human words. Her face was half beautiful, half unspeakable, with Medusa curls and great eyes that looked as if they were carved out of green stone. Two long yellow teeth, like a tiger's fangs, grew right down over her lip. She had a queer passion for Helen who hated and feared

her. Whenever she could, Micky would break away from her nurses and try to fondle Helen. She would stroke her hair, muttering, 'Pretty, pretty', with her deformed mouth. Micky's breath on her cheek was hot and sour like an animal's, her slack hair was rough as wire. The reality of Micky was worse than any nightmare; she was shameful, obscene.

The Vitriol woman was far more horrible to look at, but far less repulsive. Helen had heard the nurses whispering how the woman's husband had thrown acid at her. Her face was one raw, red, shining burn, without lid or brow, almost without lips. She always wore a neat black hat and a neat, common blue coat with a fur collar. Everyone she met she addressed with the same agonized question: 'Have you seen Fred? Where's Fred? Take me to Fred!'

One one of the dirty walls someone had chalked up:

Baby.

Blood.

Murder.

And no one had bothered to wipe it out.

The yard was a horror that seemed to have no place in the world, yet from beyond the walls would come pleasant ordinary noises of motors passing, and people walking and bells ringing. Above the walls, Helen could see a rather beautiful, slender dome, pearl-coloured against the sky and tipped with a gilt spear. It reminded her of some building she knew very well but whose name, like her own, she had forgotten.

One day, she was left almost alone in the yard. Sitting on the broken bench by the plane tree was a young girl, weeping. Helen went up to her. She had a gentle, bewildered face; with loose soft plaits falling round it. Helen went and sat by her and drew the girl's head on to her own shoulder. It seemed years since she had touched another person with affection. The girl nestled against her. Her neck was greenish-white, like privet; when Helen touched it curiously, its warmth and softness were so lovely that tears came into her eyes. The girl was so gentle and defenceless, like some small, confiding animal, that Helen felt a sudden love for her run through all her veins. There was a faint country smell about her hair, like clover.

'I love you,' murmured Helen, hardly knowing what she said. But suddenly a flock of giggling nurses were upon them with a chatter of:

'Look at this, will you', and,

'Break away there.'

She never saw the country girl again.

And so day after day went past, punctuated by dreary meals and drearier walks. She only lived through each because she knew that sooner or later Robert must come to fetch her away, and this hope carried her through each night. There were messages from him sometimes, half glimpsed in the flight of birds, in the sound of a horn beyond the walls, in the fine lines ruled on a blade of grass. But he himself never came, and at last there came a day when she ceased to look for him. She gave up. She accepted everything. She was no longer Helen or Veronica, no longer even a fairy horse. She had become an Inmate.

### CONJUGAL FIDELITY

# A SUPPRESSED DIALOGUE BETWEEN BOSWELL AND JOHNSON

The Conversation reprinted below is from the very rare uncancelled state of page 302 of Volume II of the first edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson.

Boswell wrote to Malone about this page: 'I must have a cancelled leaf in Vol. II. . . . I wonder how you and I admitted this to the public eye, for Wyndham, etc., were struck with its indelicacy, and it might hurt the book much. It is, however, mighty good stuff.' Very few copies escaped into publicity with the dialogue intact; and had it not been expurgated in the others it is likely that Johnson's position as a moralist would not, during the nineteenth century, have been as secure and authoritative as it was. The passages printed here between brackets occur also in the expurgated version and in any edition of the Life, where the dialogue ends thus:

'Here it may be questioned whether Johnson was entirely in the right. I suppose it will not be controverted that the difference in the degree of criminality is very great, on account of consequences: but still it may be maintained, that, independent of moral obligation, infidelity is by no means a light offence in a husband; because it must hurt a delicate attachment, in which a mutual constancy is implied, with such refined sentiments as Massinger has exhibited in his play of *The Picture*. Johnson probably at another time would have admitted this opinion. And let it be kept in remembrance, that he was very careful not to give any encouragement to irregular conduct. A gentleman, not adverting to the

distinction made by him upon this subject, supposed a case of singular perverseness in a wife, and heedlessly said: "That then he thought a husband might do as he pleased with a safe conscience." Johnson: "Nay, Sir, this is wild indeed (smiling); you must consider that fornication is a crime in a single man; and you cannot have more liberty by being married.""

On comparing this version with the unexpurgated page it will be seen how effectively Boswell saved the sage's reputation for rigour. When in making the necessary sacrifices, Boswell described the dialogue as 'mighty good stuff', he was probably thinking of it as a prime example of that downright clear-headed candour which fascinated him and fascinates us in Johnson's conversation.

EDITOR.

[I mentioned to him a dispute between a friend of mine and his lady, concerning conjugal infidelity, which my friend had maintained was by no means so bad in the husband, as in the wife.

Johnson: 'Your friend was in the right, Sir. Between a man and his Maker it is a different question; but between a man and his wife, a husband's infidelity is nothing. They are connected by children, by fortune, by serious considerations of community. Wise married women don't trouble themselves about infidelity in their husbands;] they detest a mistress, but don't mind a whore. My wife told me I might lye with as many women as I pleased, provided I loved her alone.'

Boswell: 'She was not in earnest.'

Johnson: 'But she was; consider, Sir, how gross it is in a wife to complain of her husband's going to other women, merely as women; it is that she has not enough of what she would be ashamed to avow.'

Boswell: 'And was Mrs. Johnson then so liberal, Sir? [To be sure there is a great difference between the offence of infidelity in a man and his wife.'

Johnson: 'The difference is boundless'.

Boswell: 'Yes, boundless as to property and honours.' Johnson: 'The man imposes no bastards upon his wife.']

Boswell: 'Suppose, Sir, a woman be of a very cold constitution, has she any right to complain of her husband's infidelity?'

Johnson: 'Sir, if she refuses, she has no right to complain.'

Boswell: 'Then, Sir, according to your doctrine, upon every such occasion a man may make a note in his pocket-book, and [do as he pleases with a safe conscience.'

Johnson: 'Nay, Sir, this is wild indeed (smiling); you must consider that fornication is a crime in a single man; and you cannot have more liberty by being married.']

### JANKO LAVRIN

### ALEXANDER BLOK

I

Although the poetic work of Alexander Blok is great and individual enough to defy any labels, some of its aspects can best be understood if treated in connection with Russian symbolism. The Russian symbolism proper came only partly out of that 'decadent' current whose devotees were anxious to free the literature of their country from social and various other 'purposes'. Realizing the dangers of too narrow an art-for-art's sake theory, as well as of an equally narrow egotism (derived mainly from Nietzsche), a few members of that group began to champion a deeper conception and a religious affirmation of life. This new departure had to pass through the vehement propaganda of Merezhkovsky and his circle, through the gatherings of the Religious-Philosophic Society, through numerous literary ventures and adventures, before it crystallized—during the first few years of the present century-into a definite movement and reached its climax in such poets as Vyacheslav Ivanov, Andrey Biely, and Alexander Blok.

One of the chief characteristics of that movement was that, in spite of its innovations in literary technique, it showed a strong endeavour to transcend art and literature as such. Its aim was above all a new consciousness, a new dispensation of life. And such an aim was bound to come into direct or indirect contact with the religious thought of Russia—with that of Dostoevsky, for instance, or even more of Vladimir Solovyóv. For, together with

Dostoevsky, Solovyóv (who died only in 1900) was one of the most remarkable religious thinkers of modern Russia. The object of his writings was to blend philosophy, religion and life in a harmonious synthesis. Utopian as he was, he dreamed of a regeneration of humanity from within: a regeneration through love and through such a change of consciousness as would lead mankind to what he called 'the integral fullness of existence.' Deeply versed in European philosophy, in the teaching of gnostics and of Christian mystics, he adhered, on the whole, to that metaphysical teaching which interprets the cosmic process as the fall of the 'World-Soul' from God and her gradual return to Him. His spiritual strivings and visions he recorded not only in his philosophic-theological writings, but also in his poetry-since his much too involved theories fortunately did not prevent him from being an able poet. With his belief that alles Vergaengliche ist ein Gleichnis, his visionary power and his romantic endeavour to go beyond the present man, he may be justly called the first important representative of Russian symbolism. And his influence is conspicuous most of all in the towering figure of that school—in Alexander Blok.

#### II

It sounds almost like a paradox that Alexander Blok, who is now regarded as the greatest Russian modernist, had practically no idea of modern poetry until he was eighteen. The favourite reading of his youth was the tender dreamer, Zhukovsky, and those German romantics with whom he felt a certain inner affinity. Of decisive importance for his development was, however, his subsequent acquaintance with Solovyóv's works. They were largely responsible not only for the trend, but, perhaps,

even for the awakening of his poetic genius. Like Solovyóv, he too identified the 'World-Soul' of the gnostics with the transcendental Eternal Femininity from which he expected salvation, and towards which he directed all his erotic and religious ardour. His awakened sex turned thus entirely within—towards the phantoms conjured up by his mystical imagery. He not only thought—he actually felt love as the key to the mystery of life and the universe. And the result of his inspirations was one of the most accomplished romantic books in modern poetry: his Verses about the Lady Fair.

These first poems of his, which appeared in 1905, blend Solovyóv's visionary yearning for the miraculous with the erotic dreaminess of a Novalis, and the music of Shelley with the tenderness of Dante's Vita Nuova. They are like prayers of a mystical troubadour singing the praise of the Eternal Feminine. His visions overpower him at times to such an extent as to make him prostrate himself before his abstract 'Virgin of the Rainbow Gates' in a humility bordering on utter self-effacement. Unaware of the actual world, he sings like a man in a trance, or like a medium whose very passivity is an essential condition of his own intoxication. His images and metaphors are vague as if enveloped in a haze; yet they are suggestive by their very vagueness. He has an uncanny capacity for rendering the 'aura' of words and symbols. His language may be reminiscent, now and then, of Solovyóv, but the melody is entirely his own. And it reveals already here a treasury of new rhythms, of new musical and prosodic devices.

Although Blok's guardian spirit during the whole of that period was Solovyóv, the 'Dostoevskian' element of split and of spiritual antitheses began to intrude. The prayer-like serenity of those early poems of his (he wrote about 800 of them before he was twenty-five) was disturbed, now and then, by flashes which suddenly revealed in the distance the opposite depth: that of spiritual descent, of blasphemy and rebellion. Blok expressed them so far only in terms either of forebodings or of fear:

> I am afraid of my double-faced soul And I carefully conceal My diabolic and wild face Underneath this sacred armour.

As a religious temperament, Blok knew all the fascination of that region in which the greatest devotion and the greatest blasphemy meet. And as if afraid of such temptations, he clung for a while all the more fervently to the vision of his Beatrice—like a child who is scared and yet knows that the inevitable cannot be avoided. Utterances of his premonitions can be found in his symbolic nightmare, 'The Night Violet', and also in the following brief poem, addressed to his Lady Fair:

I have foreknown Thee! Oh, I have foreknown Thee Going,

The years have shown me Thy premonitory face. Intolerably clear, the farthest sky is glowing. I wait in silence Thy withheld and worshipped grace. The farthest sky is glowing: white for Thy appearing. Yet terror clings to me. Thy image will be strange. And insolent suspicion will rouse upon Thy nearing. The features long foreknown, beheld at last will change. How shall I then be fallen!—low, with no defender: Dead dreams will conquer me, the glory, glimpsed, will change.

The farthest sky is glowing! Nearer looms the splendour! Yet terror clings to me. Thy image will be strange.<sup>1</sup>

#### III

What followed was, in fact, a radical change of Her image. Blok, with his ever-present urge to blend art and life, realized soon enough that his genius had no right to dwell indefinitely in the glowing heights above and apart from the world at large. At first he descended to that world with an ardent desire to transform it through his own aspirations and visions. But a close contact with it only revealed to him the utter discrepancy of the two realities. Love, as symbolized in his ethereal Lady Fair, had nothing to do with what he found under the name of love on earth. His disgust with all he saw became crushing and full of rancour. His former romantic intoxication turned thus into a romantic tedium the very intensity of which gave him at last a painful thrill and joy. Unable to indulge in his dreams any longer, he sought now for inspiration in the depth of his own spiritual disgust. He even revelled in his 'fall' as if taking revenge upon everything he once had adored.

Blok's little lyrical play, The Puppet Show (Balaganchik, 1905), was one of his first attempts to ridicule his former vision by means of buffoonery. In another play, The Unknown Lady (Neznakomka), he let his mystical Beatrice—symbolized as a star—fall on to our earth and become an ordinary prostitute. In a haunting poem under the same title we find her in a suburban tavern near Petrograd. In black silk and in a hat with ostrich feathers, she sits there

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Trans. by Babette Deutsch and Avram Yarmolinsky, in Modern Russian Anthology (Harcourt, Brace & Co.).

every night and, surrounded by drunkards, still emanates the mystery of another world:

> And in my brain the soft slow flittering Of ostrich feathers waves once more; And fathomless the azure glittering Where two eyes blossom on the shore.

But since the squalor of the world around threatens to destroy even such occasional glimpses, the poet finds a refuge from it only in actual drunkenness, in wine. In wine alone he still recovers for a while his *own*, his former truth and vision.

Blok's tragedy was that having lost all faith in his symbolic Lady Fair, he still felt the need of serving her with the same devotion as before. This discord, however painful in itself, strengthened his poetry by lending it a dynamic tension; by making him express his new moods through new and daring devices. Yet the discord itself could not be bridged over. Unable to worship, he had to blaspheme. His eroticism became now even too earthly and its sensuous élan often equalled that of his former mystical ecstasies. With his sense of infinity he was prone to overstep all limits on this plane, too. Moreover, he wanted to transfer his passion upon something that was boundless and painfully intoxicating in its immensity. As if hoping that only such love could appease his unsatisfied yearning, he found a new beloved in-Russia. Not in the 'holy', but in the concrete, earthly and yet irrational Russia of endless spaces, of winds and blizzards, of flying troikas, of maddening sadness, drunkenness, poverty and chaos:

> I will listen to the voice of drunken Russia, And I will rest under a tavern roof.

Snow Masks—such is the title of his most characteristic book of that period. And its main note is intoxication: intoxication with blizzards, with wine, with passion and with pain. The ecstasy of self-annihilation rings in the accents of his sensuous 'Faina'. In the more virile verses of another section, 'Enchantment through Fire', one feels a certain amor fati, which is, however, followed by a still greater despondency and by a wish to forget himself, like a drunkard, in various psychic drugs. But a time came when even these would help no longer: he had to look at the world with a cold mind, and with cold sober eyes.

#### IV

The prevalent mood of that phase of his (roughly from 1910 to 1917) can best be defined as spiteful apathy. The drabness and vulgarity of existence overpowered him to such an extent as to make all effort futile. The title of his main collection of that period, The Loathsome World, is in itself significant. In Iambi he tried to stir up his crushed faith in life; in the romantic drama, The Rose and the Cross (1912) his smouldering devotion to his Lady Fair flared up once more; while in the cycle Carmen he rekindled his former passion. Yet the fire that was now burning came too much out of the ashes. Everything seemed futile, drab and empty. Forebodings of the end, of a great Apocalyptic catastrophe, began to hover over some of his verses like ominous shadows.

Blok's language, too, underwent a further change. It became even more straightforward, terse, realistic and symbolic in its realism. Various parts of his *Danses Macabres*, for instance, are externally realistic, but their essence is symbolic. His dancers, though ordinary Philis-

tines on the surface, are only corpses pretending to be alive. Through their words and movements one hears the clatter of bones-to the gay rhythm of music. Another longer poem, 'The Life of my Friend', is written in the same vein. In his beautiful 'Garden of Nightingales' (Solovyiny sad) the disappointed romantic dreamer emerged for a while with all the magic of his art. But he capitulated once more and remained a prey to his nihilistic disgust with life, with humanity, with the entire world order. No wonder that, when the revolution broke out. Blok greeted it with enthusiasm. It was an enthusiasm born out of despair. Together with his friend, Andrey Biely, he hailed it as an event of universal significance. The hope of seeing the earth renewed and purified, aroused his energies and prompted to him his last two important poems (in January 1918), 'The Twelve' and 'The Scythians'.

The first of them is perhaps the highwater mark of Blok's rhythmical power, and as such it defies all attempts at an adequate translation, whether in verse or in prose. At the same time it is like a knot in which most of his elements meet in order to enhance the impression of the whole. Blok's love of the irrational Russia, of chaos, his will to destruction, his ardent wish of regeneration—they all combine in that weird rhapsody whose simple, almost bald realism is so intensely symbolic. The very opening reminds one of Blok's winds and blizzards:

Black night. White snow. The wind, the wind! It will not let you go. The wind, the wind!

Through God's whole world it blows. The wind is weaving the white snow. Brother ice peeps from below. Stumbling and tumbling, Folk slip and fall. God pity all!

The wind is a whirl, the snow is a dance. In the night twelve men advance. Black, narrow rifle straps, Cigarettes, tilted caps.<sup>1</sup>

The narrative incident itself is crude and could have been taken from any police chronicle. One of the twelve bolshevist soldiers, who control Petrograd at night, shoots, in a fit of jealousy, his sweetheart, Katya—a lewd streetgirl whose 'stockings are stuffed with Kerensky coins'. This motive is cunningly interwoven with the chaos of wind and snow, and with the orgy of revolution. The atmosphere is suggested by the very rhythm, tone and accent of the stanzas. And as to Blok's own mood and temper, we can gather them from the way he derides the old 'bourgeois' order:

A bourgeois, a lonely mourner,
His nose tucked in his ragged fur,
Stands lost and idle in the corner,
Tagged by a cringing, mangy cur.
The bourgeois, like a hungry mongrel—
A silent question—stands and begs;
The old world, like a kinless mongrel,
Stands there, its tail between its legs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Trans. by Babette Deutsch and Avram Yarmolinsky, in Russian Poetry (Martin Lawrence). A reliable prose translation is that by C. B. Bechhofer (Chatto & Windus).

Nothing that belongs to the old world matters to him any more. Even the 'holy Russia' of the good old days can be blasphemed and trampled underfoot for the sake of a new era:

> More daring, friends, take the lot! At Holy Russia let's fire a shot! At hutted Russia, Fat rumped and solid. Russia the stolid! Ekh, ekh, unhallowed, unblessed.

The fury of destruction permeates the very air. The perpetrators themselves may not be aware of its deeper meaning, yet such a meaning is there, in spite of all. And so 'the twelve' march with self-assurance. Through destruction, crime and chaos, they march on, until they find themselves, in the end, in rather unexpected company:

Forward as a haughty host they thread. A hungry mongrel shambles in the rear, Bearing forth the banner's windy red, Where the vagrant snow-veils veer, In dim hands no bullets sear, On the tempest gently thrown, Like a snow of diamonds blown, In mist-white roses garlanded—Christ marches on. And the twelve are led.

### V

This poem, which is by now world famous, is certainly full of revolutionary pathos. None the less, it remains elusive enough to be interpreted in various ways. Its end in particular—with Christ at the head of the twelve

bolshevist murderers—may strike one even as an unconscious sneer, or a blasphemous parody. It is interesting that Blok himself was not quite sure as to its real meaning and attentively listened to the eager comments of his critics. One thing, however, is beyond doubt: 'The Twelve' marks a final attempt on his part to overcome his own void and to conquer a new faith in humanity and life. And this attempt he expressed with a verbal power which raised even the revolutionary street-jargon and the modern factory ditty (chastushka) into high poetry.

Less elusive and almost programmatic is his other poem, 'The Scythians'. It is a rhetorical pendant to 'The Twelve'. In it Blok challenges the luke-warm 'bourgeois' West to join in the universal brotherhood inaugurated by Russia, or else—to tremble before a barbaric invasion to come. Conscious of being the builder of a new world, he addresses the Western nations both as a Russian and a revolutionary:

Yea, you have long since ceased to love As our cold blood can love; the taste You have forgotten of a love That burns like fire and like fire lays waste.

Yes, Russia is a Sphinx. Exulting, grieving, And sweating blood, she cannot sate Her eyes that gaze and gaze and gaze At you with stone-lipped love for you, and hate.

This 'stone-lipped love' and hatred in one with regard to the European West, are curiously reminiscent of the old Slavophil Dostoevsky. Blok's Utopia, too, is permeated with a Messianism no less naïve than that of the Slavophil sermons—only in his case it is turned not towards Christ-

ianity, but towards a bolshevist millennium. This is why he shouts, at the top of his voice, to the sceptical and reluctant Western Europe:

Come unto us, from the black ways of war, Come to our peaceful arms and rest. Comrades, while it is not too late, Sheathe the old sword. May brotherhood be blessed.

And in case the Western peoples should refuse to join, he threatens them with the 'Asiatic face' of Russia, as well as with Russia's indifference to their future fate:

We will not move when the ferocious Hun Despoils the corpse and leaves it bare, Burns towns, herds cattle in the church And smell of white flesh roasting fills the air.

Alas, like many other enthusiasts of revolution, Blok, too, was compelled to witness that pious hopes and wishes have little to do with the revolutionary practice as such. When he saw at last the real face of events, he got thoroughly tired of the 'chains of liberty', and his enthusiasm died away for good. Disgust and void closed upon him once more—this time without any hope of escape. He drifted towards a growing despair. Finally, in 1921, he succumbed to a heart disease, at the age of forty-one. His death coincided with a complete dissolution of the Russian school of symbolism with which he was so closely connected.

### A. E. POPHAM

# ELEPHANTOGRAPHIA

The credulity of the medieval world has been a constant theme for our enlightened ridicule. Its love of the marvellous, its unreasoning belief in the fantastic creations of the bestiaries, have often been held up to the derision of a modern world of which the vastness has been circumscribed and the mysteries explained. But the whole medieval world was but a portion of Europe, flanked on the west by an uncharted ocean, on the east by continents all but untrodden extending to the earth's distant rim. When from this fabulous, vague beyond emerged an actual monster like the elephant, is it surprising that imagination peopled the unknown with other creatures unauthentic, but hardly less incredible? Had the proverbial traveller returned with stories alone, a judicious scepticism might have banished from the realm of actuality not only the monstrous elephant, the ridiculous rhinoceros, the absurd giraffe of his truthful narrative, but also the specious unicorn, the not incredible phoenix and the inhabitant of the torrid zone whose single foot a considerate providence had enlarged to the dimensions and adapted to the purpose of a parasol. The traveller's tale of Behemoth confirmed, what excuse for doubt remained?

To a Europe, sceptical perhaps till then, Harun-al-Raschid introduced this confirmation of its wildest dreams. A living elephant, the first since classical times to tread the civilized soil of Europe, was one of the lordly gifts sent by the Caliph to the Emperor Charlemagne. It

is said to have been disembarked at Pisa in the year 802, to have been called Abulabaz and to have died near Aixla-Chapelle some eight years later.

For more than 400 years after Charlemagne, Europe remained elephantless. It was not until 1229 that Italy was again gratified by a sight of one of the monsters. Acquired in the Holy Land, it was brought back by the Emperor Frederick II and used by that remarkable man in his attack on Cremona. It bore on its back a castle manned by Saracens and the Imperial standard waved above it. In the triumph which followed the fall of the city, the elephant played the part so often assigned to it in the days of Imperial Rome. It entered the city in the midst of the victorious army, drawing behind it a wagon-load of distinguished captives, amid the cheers of the population.

It is doubtless this same animal on another occasion which our Matthew Paris has depicted in the margin of a MS. in the British Museum. When Earl Richard of England visited the Emperor at Cremona in 1241, the elephant was sent out to do honour to the royal visitor. In Matthew Paris's drawing the animal bears the inevitable castle containing a crowd of no less than ten musicians, besides the 'magister bestie' armed with an ankus and a formidable bell. The drawing can lay no claim to being from the life though, as we shall see, the monk of St. Albans was later enabled to see and draw another elephant. This was the animal which accompanied St. Louis on his return from his disastrous crusade in 1254. The motives which induced the King to encumber his homeward journey with such a monster must remain conjectural. Perhaps the hope that a greater marvel might turn men's eyes from the spectacle of his return, a

ransomed captive, may have moved him, surely not a vainglorious rivalry with a defunct and almost heathen emperor. The sojourn of this animal in France, short as it was, has found commemoration in a lasting monument. He takes his place, a sober, realistic Indian elephant among the *chimères* of Notre Dame, the first authentic likeness, I believe, drawn or carved in Europe since Roman times, different indeed from the extraordinary creatures, purporting to be elephants, which decorate the pages of thirteenth-century romances.

The King of France soon tired of his elephant, and sent him, in 1255, across the channel as a gift to our Henry III. The English menagerie already, we are gratified to learn, one of the most important in Europe, was thus rendered pre-eminent. The City of London, to whom the King had granted the privilege and assigned the expense of housing and feeding the royal animals, were instructed to provide a building forty feet long by twenty feet wide. The people, Matthew Paris tells us, flocked to see the novel sight. To the monk of St. Albans we are again indebted for a convincing likeness of the elephant with his keeper Henricus de Flor. 'Per quantitatem hominis hic protracti considerari potest quantitas bestie hic figurate.'

It is not long before Matthew Paris's representation is forgotten and 'elephantographia,' to borrow the word of a seventeenth-century German pedant, again degenerates into caricature. No artist, however accomplished, could construct a real elephant from written records. A creature with the hind legs of a horse, the proportions of a pig, and a trunk constructed on the analogy of a trumpet, enlivens the bestiaries and gambols before the Alexander of medieval romance until well into the fifteenth century. That elephants must again have made their

appearance in Western Europe about this time might be inferred from various works of art, were no written records of their presence to be found. But such exist. Jehan de Bourdigné, in his Chroniques d'Anjou et du Maine, relates that René, Duke of Anjou and titular King of Sicily, then resident in Provence, received from his friend Alfonso V, King of Portugal, an elephant, two dromedaries, two civets, and several other remarkable animals. This was in or about the year 1477, long before Vasco da Gama's first voyage round the Cape to India. But Bourdigné, writing about 1529, at a time when the brilliant exploits of Portugal in the Far East were in every man's mind, not unnaturally assumes that these animals were Indian. A provenance from Portugal, in 1477, when Portuguese trade extended only to the West Coast of Africa, would seem rather to point to an eventual origin from this continent. In fact, the elephants which we find depicted in the second half of the fifteenth century are unequivocally African. The noble animals in Mantegna's Triumphs of Caesar at Hampton Court (about 1484), though they do not show a first-hand acquaintance with the creature's anatomy, must be based on some fairly accurate historical record. The small head, the enormous ears are indubitably African. Schongauer's distinctly comic engraving (dating from before 1491), also obviously based on a drawing, or even on an elaborate written description, represents an African elephant. The elephant which appears in the background of Hieronymus Bosch's picture known as the Garden of Delights in the Escorial, and the embattled elephant in Alart du Hameel's engraving after the same artist's design, are both African. The latter in particular is so lifelike as to imply a first-hand knowledge by the artist of an actual

specimen. The exuberance of fantastic detail, the extravagance of invention which Bosch lavished on the attackers, make the verisimilitude of the beast itself the more conspicuous. Did René's elephant find its way to the Netherlands—Guicciardini, writing in 1563, states that elephants had been seen there before that time—or did Bosch visit Provence or Portugal? Or is the Attack on the Elephant based on some unusually accurate drawing? Answers to these questions must remain conjectural. Let us return to certain records.

In May of the year 1514, a gorgeous embassy appeared in Rome. It was sent by Emmanuel, King of Portugal, to obtain from his Holiness Leo X the Church's ratification for the possessions which the Portuguese had acquired in the Indies. The famous sailor, Tristan da Cunha, supported by two well-known lawyers, Juan de Faria and Diego Pacheco, headed the mission. Among the rich offerings laid before the Pontiff was included a selection of the animals indigenous to the vast territories over which his suzerainty was to extend. Among these an elephant, gorgeously accoutred, held pride of place. The sensation which the passage of this animal through the city occasioned, is attested by a volume of contemporary evidence. The excitement which its mere sight induced in the assembled multitude, was raised to a boundless enthusiasm at the piety and intelligence which the vast animal displayed. Arrived before the window of the palace at which the Pope had taken his station, Hanno, as the elephant was named, made three genuflexions as his tribute to the supreme head of the Church, convincing evidence not only of piety, but of a flexibility of limb which authors from Aristotle onwards had denied him. Having edified the spectators by such unequivocal signs

of suppleness and orthodoxy, Hanno proceeded to amuse them. Drawing up water through his trunk he sprayed it over the crowd, not excepting some of the more eminent spectators at the windows of the palaces, much to the entertainment of His Holiness.

The elephant was housed in the Vatican along with the other animals of the extensive papal menagerie. A few incidents of his subsequent career are recorded. He was made to take a part in the burlesque triumph of the poetaster Baraballo, one of those crude and elaborate practical jokes in which the great potentates of the Renaissance found entertainment. Baraballo, mounted on the elephant, was being marched in mock triumph to the Capitol where he was to have been crowned in emulation of Petrarch. Hanno, however, refused to continue the farce, rid himself of his mount at the bridge of Sant Angelo, and returned to the Palace. Charged with the tower full of people which was considered the appropriate equipment of an elephant, he was also to have figured in a procession at the marriage of Giuliano de Medici, but, alarmed at the cannon discharged in honour of the occasion, he stampeded and threw himself and his burden into the Tiber.

Hanno, who was four years of age at the time of his arrival in Italy, survived for only two years. He died on 8th June 1516, after a few days' illness, of which the ingenious and probably unreliable authors of the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum* give some account. I quote the original, to the intelligible dog Latinity of which Gibbon's 'decent obscurity of a learned language' cannot be applied. 'Vos bene audivistis qualiter papa habuit unum magnum animal quod vocatum fuit Elephas. Et habuit ipsum in magno honore, et valde amavit illud. Nunc

igitur debetis scire quod tale animal est mortuum. Et quando fuit infirmum, tunc papa fuit in magna tristitia. Et vocavit medicos plures, et dixit eis: "Si est possibile, sanate mihi Elephas." Tunc fecerunt magnum diligentiam et viderunt ei urinam et dederunt ei unam purgationem quae constat quinque centum aureas: sed tamen non potuerunt Elephas facere merdare: et sic est mortuum. Et papa dolet multum super Elephas. Et dicunt quod daret mille ducatos pro Elephas. Quia fuit mirabile animal habens longum rostrum in magna quantitate.'

Nothing remained for the Pope's chamberlain, Branconio dell' Acquila, to whose care the elephant had been committed, except the raising of a worthy monument. It seemed fitting that the greatest of painters should immortalize with his brush the greatest of animals, and Raphael was commissioned to perpetuate Hanno's memory by a life-size painting on a tower of the Vatican. Raphael appears, however, to have deputed an uncongenial task to Giulio Romano, and it was this artist who actually carried out the work. The painting has perished, but in a drawing by Giulio in the University Galleries at Oxford, we have Hanno's authentic portrait. This drawing was elaborated into a composition known as the Battle with the Elephants, and as later engraved by Cornelis Cort (1567) obtained wide currency and supplied the standard representation of the elephant for many years to come. In the epitaph placed by Branconio dell' Acquila below the painting, Hanno is made to attribute his untimely death to a Fate which envied him his propinquity to the great Pope: he entreats the gods to add to Leo's years those many of an elephant's life of which he had been deprived. Many authors record the story of Hanno's refusal to embark on the ship which was to carry him to Europe until

his destiny as the servant of the chief of the Christian world had been made clear to him: Rorarius alone relates that a solemn promise of his return was also made. Perhaps the unfulfilment of this pledge, rather than the envious Fate, caused the death of a creature possessed of 'sensi umani in petto di bruto'.

We are indebted to the learned Nicolas Isthvanffius for the account he has given us of an elephant presented by João III of Portugal to Maximilian King of Bohemia, afterwards Emperor. This animal, which entered Vienna on 14th April 1552, is the next after the unlucky Hanno of which I have found particulars. Gabriel de Luitz baron d'Aramont, the French ambassador at Constantinople, had, indeed, somewhere about 1545 arranged for the dispatch of an elephant from Persia to the most Christian King, but the animal died on the journey at Berrhoea (Calep) in Syria. Pierre Gilles, who witnessed his death and rescued most of the carcase, purloined piecemeal by the inhabitants, wrote a careful description, which was published at Lyons in 1562 and many times reprinted. But the enumeration of the many animals which must have died en route for Europe lies outside our scope, and we must return to Maximilian's elephant. This was brought from Spain in Andrea Doria's fleet and disembarked at Genoa. We catch a glimpse of him at Milan, where, according to Cardano, an archbishop received the same homage which his predecessor, Hanno, had reserved for a Pope. The entry into Vienna was marked by a touching incident, such as a sophisticated age might well attribute to the exigences of publicty, and the eye of a business manager. Marie Geiger, wife of the owner of 'Zur Goldenen Krone' in the Graben, dropped her infant before the advancing feet of the monster. The relief of the

horrified onlookers, expecting immediate tragedy, may be imagined when the animal raised the baby in his trunk and gently placed him in his mother's arms. The grateful father carved on his house the image of an elephant, inscribed with doggerel rhymes, in which, however, no mention of the event, no word of thankfulness occurs. According to Cardano, the animal was about thirteen at the time of his arrival. Alas! but two years after an armchair constructed of his bones was presented at the Emperor's command to his faithful Sebastian Hulstall.

The relief carved on the wall of the house in the Graben has disappeared, but other representations of this elephant survive. The one, a leaden medal by an artist who uses the initials M. F., is inscribed 'Dieser Helfant ist kumen gien Wien in die stat da man in bei seinem leben abkonterfet hat', and dated 1554: the other, a rather feeble drawing in black chalk in a Sloane Album in the British Museum, has the Flemish inscription, 'Desen olifant vas mij ghesonden van Wijener wch osten ryck naet leven gheconterfeyt', and the date, which must be incorrect, of 1550. There can be little doubt that this represents the elephant of 1552, and that the owner of the album, of which it formed a part, was mistaken in his record of the date.

The elephant's stall in the Imperial menagerie at Ebersdorf was not long to remain tenantless. Maximilian was indebted to the generosity of the King of Portugal (of Spain, according to Clusius and Guicciardini) for a new specimen. This animal, about eight years of age, was conveyed by sea from Portugal to Zealand and marched thence to Antwerp, where its arrival on 24th September 1563 caused a tremendous sensation. Authors are divided

on its merits. Guicciardini in a passage, to which I have already referred, is distinctly supercilious: 'Qui plus est, du temps que je dressoy cette description, au moys de Septembre 1563 fut amené icy un Elephant Indien que le Roy d'Espaigne envoyait a son cousin le Roy de Boesme; pour lequel voir, le peuple venoit a tas et troupes infines, bien que ce ne fust le premier qu'on avoit veu en ces contries. Et toutesfois nous ne trouvons tant de singularitez et rares proprietez en cest animant, que les aucteurs anciens luy attribuent en leurs escrits; estant aussi grossier de cerveau qu'il est de corps et proportion; suyvant naivement le naturel d'un porc, prenant sa pasture mangeant et beuvant de tout ce qu'il recontre: il beut une fois tant de vin qu'il fut 24 heures qu'on le tenoit pour mort, puis revint; mais beaucoup plus affamé que jamais & ayant plus d'appetit.' Justus Lipsius's description of the animal as 'pusillum, juvenem, bonarum artium rudem' is positively scathing. The eminent botanist, Carolus Clusius, who saw the creature later in Vienna as well as at Antwerp, on the other hand speaks of its docility and intelligence as almost human, and the anonymous broadsheet, issued at Antwerp for the occasion, is naturally full of appreciation. The hopes of intellectuals based on classical authorities which attributed to the elephant more than human qualities, were raised so high that the actuality, marvellous as it appeared to the vulgar, fell far below their anticipations. The theme of Lipsius's well-known jeu d'esprit on the elephant, that this animal is morally and intellectually the superior of man, relied on the authority of the ancients. He dismisses as irrelevant the only specimen he had himself seen with the words quoted above. With him the gospel of antiquity carries more weight than the evidence of his own eyes.

The representations of the elephant of 1563 are more numerous and more accurate than those of his predecessors. They include the admirable broadsheet woodcut referred to above, which shows the animal in the streets of Antwerp surrounded by a curious crowd: inset are small pictures of the elephant drinking, retrieving a sword, and fighting against his traditional foe the rhinoceros. But the most striking and interesting is an extremely rare etching by Gerard Paludanus of Groningen, which depicts him in eight different positions, and is inscribed with eight lines of verse by Hugo Favolius. To these must be added a new version of Bosch's Attack on the Elephant, due to some anonymous artist in the employment of the Antwerp publisher Hieronymus Cock. The engraver has obviously revised the original by a reference to the animal he had seen in 1563, or by the help of the etching. He has, however, retained the large African ears, a decorative feature of the old engraving, and produced a hybrid animal unknown, I believe, to zoology. The inhabitants of Antwerp showed the impression which the passage of the animal through their city had produced in another way. A life-size wooden image of the elephant was constructed and henceforth accompanied the Antwerp Giant and the other monstrosities in their annual procession through the streets. An engraving of this model, resting on a wheeled platform, occurs in the work illustrating the entry of the Archduke Albert and his wife Isabella into Antwerp in 1599.

Of the living animal's progress through Germany to Vienna, I have found no account, but Clusius relates that he often saw it at the Emperor's Court, where it died a few years later owing to the lack of female companionship.

A peculiar passage in Van Mander may doubtless be explained by reference to this creature or his predecessor. The author of the Lives of Flemish Painters speaks of a picture by Pieter Baltens of the Preaching of St. John the Baptist, belonging to the Emperor, from which the Saint had been expunged and replaced by the figure of an elephant. This simple change and the enraptured audience of the Preacher became the gaping visitors at a menagerie. Thus was Maximilian II enabled to perpetuate his favourite and spare his cash. This curious monument to an Emperor's parsimony and to his love of animals has, unfortunately, disappeard.

I have found no pictorial record of the next elephant which is reported to have reached Europe, but a mention of it may be excused. It was sent as a gift to Henry IV of France and disembarked at Dieppe in 1591, when Henry was occupied with the siege of Noyon. He writes thence to his receveur de finance to arrange for the animal's upkeep, but this seems to have proved too costly. At any rate, on 4th September 1592, Henry writes to the governor of Dieppe instructing him to make arrangements for the animal's transport across the channel 'ayant entendu que la royne d'Angleterre, madame ma bonne seur, aurait agréable un elephant qui est à Dieppe je luy en ay faict present'. No doubt the transport was successfully arranged, for references to the elephant are to be found in contemporary English literature. I do not know how long the creature survived, but it may be presumed from Shakespeare's reference in Troilus and Cressida to

'The elephant which hath no joints for courtesy' that the dramatist had not seen a living specimen. It is, I think, generally assumed that Topsell was Shakespeare's authority on natural history, and the picture of the elephant in that work is derived, at third or fourth hand through Gessner, from Schongauer's engraving.

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Our survey must conclude with the end of the sixteenth century. The elephants which were displayed in Europe in the course of the succeeding two centuries, and their representation in contemporary art, are too numerous to allow of their being treated here. The extension of trade with India and the entry into this field of Holland and England, increased facilities, and elephants are already a comparatively familiar sight in Europe in the seventeenth century, and their delineation correspondingly accurate. A specimen, for example, was displayed at Frankfurt and Nuremberg in 1629, and was etched by Hollar: another, said to have been white, was seen in Amsterdam in 1633 and was drawn by Rembrandt in 1637; of yet another, an etching by Cornelis Saftleven exists, and the portrayal of a fourth, this time an African specimen, probably that sent by the King of Portugal to Louis XIV in 1668, is preserved in an etching by Pieter Boel.



### KATHLEEN JOHN

## **PROUST**

A review of two books: The Sweet Cheat Gone. Translated by C. K. Scott-Moncrieff (Knopf. 10s. 6d.) Marcel Proust: Sa Révélation Psychologique, by Arnaud Dandieu. (Firmin-Didot. 3s. 6d.)

This volume (Albertine Disparue) is certainly the weakest link in Proust's chain. Nowhere, not even in the first half, to which alone the title is completely applicable, does the reader feel beneath him the full tide of emotional experience which in the earlier volumes bore him so headily along. There is something tired and clumsy about the whole fabric. In the first place, Albertine's death quite misses fire. It comes on the reader not as a revelation, nor as a shock, nor even as an authentic piece of information, but simply as a false note; one is willing to disbelieve one's ears, one hopes, at any rate, to find it slurred over. But no: it becomes necessary to accept the death, if only as a hypothesis; Proust wanted to get rid of Albertine, and hustled her inelegantly from the stage. Her illusory reappearance in the Venetian chapter equally fails of its effect, for we have become resigned to something misty and deceptive about the whole business. The pages following the death are full of beauties—of beautiful elegaic movements, of intense experience, of scrupulous observation—but they are awkward and disjointed none the less; the harmonious development of the emotion is obscured by excursions and analyses which must, artistically, be called irrelevant. Life can admit irrelevances of the kind with no injury to the proportion; literature has not the

same lightness of touch, the same command of infinite shades and distinct undertones of feeling. And then—this is not wholly unimportant—the Albertine with whom Marcel is in love is to the reader at best a doubtful being. No sharp idea of her appearance, her manner, still less her charm, is made accessible to the imagination. If she were treated merely as a symbol, this might not matter; but she is harped on as a person, only never realised.

The rest of the book is scrappy. The social figures have become tired, mechanical; their conversation is like the dreariest of evening parties. The hero, indeed, is growing old, his friends are growing old, and he is not even conscious that they are growing, at the same time, dull and spiritless. Gilberte's marriage with Saint-Loup, an incident boldly romantic in conception, scarcely excites a languid interest; and the 'new light' on Saint-Loup himself is even less lively. The general scheme is hasty and ill-proportioned; the Venetian chapter, for instance, scamped though it is, contains two full-length episodes, one of which—M. de Norpois in the restaurant—is almost an intrusion. And what a failure, by the way—and what a set, stale failure—is the moment of Mme. Sazerat's beholding the once beautiful Mme. de Villeparisis!

There is, except now and then in brilliant flashes, little humour in this volume; there is in places what may be paradoxically called a positive lack of humour. For Proust at moments falls into a kind of heavy earnestness, sometimes merely odd, sometimes tedious, sometimes, to the reader, uncomfortable. The curious incident of the little girl, and Marcel's subsequent terror of the police, may be quoted. Together with this earnestness appears a pedantic incapacity for not explaining, a pursuit of the analogy in and out of season. Aimé's habit, for instance,

of interchanging brackets and inverted commas, a mild little joke at best, is knocked mercilessly on the head by definitions, quotations from Françoise, and all the weapons of needless elucidation.

Albertine Disparue is Proust at his weakest; still, it is Proust. It is enough to interest, enlighten, irritate, though it comparatively seldom enchants one.

M. Dandieu's book deals, not with Proust's art, but with his mind and theories. Its terminology makes it, perhaps, a needless penance to the layman, but there is no doubt that its main views are sound. M. Dandieu is certainly right in considering the revelation, the moment of vision, as the basis and at the same time—if the expression can be tolerated—the summit of Proust's creative achievement. He is right in assimilating these revelations to other forms of mystical experience, and he points out clearly the unique, the sacred place of art in Proust's philosophy of life. The value of mystical experience is self-evident, but the mystic's opinions are another matter, and in this case M. Dandieu is perhaps inclined to treat them with too much deference. No one, surely, can follow Proust through, for example, this penultimate section of his work without observing that he commits incessantly that common fault of the theorist on life—excessive generalization from his own psychology. Many of his conclusions the reader must reject after the briefest review of his own mental processes—but Proust at his most powerful scarcely gives him time for such a review till he has closed the book. Proust's assertion that his readers will always be, not his readers, but readers of themselves, though movingly expressed, is in fact a double misconception; not only is it, as M. Dandieu points out, true of all books, but it is not true at all, and in Proust's case it

is less true than ever. The reader's mind is there directed. often with an immense, irresistible pressure, on those parts of itself which are in harmony with the experience before it; and thus it may be led to take that part for the whole, and to accept conclusions appropriate to the part only. For example: on Marcel's love affairs a demonstration of the hopelessness of love is slowly and industriously built; love is impossible, says Proust, unless the beloved is indifferent. This generalization can hardly be taken as serious. It is the confession of an abnormality like that involved in Mathilde's love for Julien Sorel, to which M. Dandieu compares it. Yet it is offered to the reader as a serious generalization. M. Dandieu, indeed, himself admits that the 'hopelessness of love' here depends on the temperament of the lover, though he admits it partly on a wrong ground. We learn, he says, at the end of the novel that Marcel's youthful love for Gilberte was returned. True, but then Marcel knew nothing about it; for him she was indifferent, so that Proust's view of why mutual love cannot exist is all we need question; the practical conclusion remains much the same.

There are many reasons for rejecting M. Dandieu's view that Proust has a unique place among romantic writers, earned by the honesty with which he interprets his experiences. That honesty lies very much in self-deception; but pessimists and self-tormentors easily acquire a reputation for facing the facts of life, because they turn their attention to those aspects of it which most people choose to ignore. M. Dandieu, however, is not fanatical in his hero's cause; and where he sees defects he has one comprehensive explanation of them. He puts them down to a lack of adequate contact with reality, a tendency, if not pathological, definitely morbid. A better

term than lack of contact would be lack of harmony; the last is clearly what is meant, and its presence through Proust's work is undeniable. The mate in Conrad's story felt fairly calm in the midst of the typhoon, but shrank in horror from the notion of moving, bustling about, bestirring himself in any way to save the ship. And that, says Conrad, simply meant he was afraid. It needed a typhoon to induce that state of mind in Conrad's hero; the smallest practical difficulty is enough for Proust. He is immobile from sheer panic, in terror for his sensibility. Examples are endless; there are some, in Albertine Disparue, particularly striking. When he learns that Albertine has gone, Marcel says to himself: 'Even if, to bring her back, I have to give Mme. Bontemps half my fortune, we shall still have enough left, Albertine and I, to live in comfort.' It is perhaps unnecessary to point the moral. On the principle, he then remains inactive, and shifts the burden of pursuit to Saint-Loup's shoulders. He is like a child who feels so acutely for the hero of his story-book that, in re-reading it, he skips the 'unhappy' parts; only Proust is the object of his own concern. Where, on the other hand, practical difficulties do not exist, Proust's imagination is prolific of possible disasters. His withdrawal from the present is, in its consequences, almost purely evil; for he feeds on unverified misery, which is a real suffering, and eats up also in advance his possible enjoyment, which is a most imperfect happiness, and in which real happiness loses its edge. The past, though a happier field than the future, has dangers of its own; it accustoms him to relish in events only the rare flavour added to them by memory, and it carries back his mind to a time when his actual enjoyments were purer, when experience had more gusto and the world more freshness. As he begins

to get down to the lees of life, he concludes that the vintage was inferior.

M. Dandieu cites, as an effect of this malady, the wavering of Proust's belief in the external world. Albertine, for example, only begins unquestionably to exist for him when she becomes a source of suffering. It may be doubted, however, whether this unbelief, applied to the world as a whole, is more than a speculative opinion. The external world is extremely important to him. But the emotions, the inner being of other people, are on the whole, unimportant. In other people there are two things that interest him: their surface, their behaviour—their outside, in short; and this is what draws him to the Guermantes, whose surface is particularly attractive and distinct: and secondly, the parallels he can trace in them to his own peculiarities. But of sympathy with them simply as conscious beings, as individuals each in unique possession of an invaluable past—of this kind of sympathy he has very little; he has it, perhaps, for nobody but Swann. Though he is in love with Albertine, he is not really interested in her as an individual; he can, therefore, find room for all manner of doubts about her individuality—but when she makes him suffer, the case is altered. His suffering depends on the individual in a way that his happiness never did. And when she is dead, when he has ceased to love her, he not only realises that he might just as well have loved another woman, but he sheds with his love all respect, all special feeling for the unique woman, who, in fact, happens to be the one he knew. A very great novelist with a leaning to solipsism might have seemed unlikely, but in Proust it has occurred; and there is a great deal to be said for M. Dandieu's dictum on the work resulting: 'C'est la charité, plutôt que la grâce, qui en est absente.'

### DESMOND MACCARTHY

# NOTES ON ALDOUS HUXLEY

Mr. Aldous Huxley's last volume of stories, Brief Candles (Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.), has met with a somewhat tepid reception from reviewers who a few years ago would have praised enthusiastically, but their comments will only influence opinion in so far as these reflect an already existing discontent or satiety in his many admirers. There is no falling off, quite the reverse, in Mr. Huxley's penetration and execution; the merits of these stories must. indeed, have been embarrassing to those who wished to convey their disappointment. Each story is a complete expression of its theme, and the words in which every detail is described are precise and, when occasion requires, charming. The style is his own fine blend of intellectual curiosity and æsthetic sensibility; at the same time it is faultlessly correct. It is not, it cannot be, the craftsman who has disappointed his critics. His reviewers must have started by asking themselves another question: Are these stories worth telling? That an inclination to underrate his aims should appear already asserting itself is due to a common phenomenon—satiety. All authors are musical-boxes which play a limited number of tunes, and sooner or later in the case of every author readers become aware that they are listening to variations on tunes heard before; and the crucial period in the history of every literary talent occurs when an author's merits are thus taken for granted while his limitations are discussed. Mr. Aldous Huxley is on the edge of it. Yet every real talent survives it, and not infrequently after the ordeal

by satiety those books which were received with indifference are recognized as the flowering of that talent. Even the letters of the inexhaustibly resourceful Dickens betray now and then an uneasiness lest readers of some forthcoming number will exclaim: 'Hullo, the same old stuff'; David Copperfield was a tremendous effort on his part to draw from a fresh and deeper spring.

With Aldous Huxley this period was bound to occur early in his literary career because the attitude towards life he has hitherto compelled us to share, is one in which no one can remain contented for long together. It is detached, exacting-and inconclusive, and we find ourselves perpetually looking down on human nature; we never have the exhilaration of looking up. To share his detachment is for a while, flattering; for though we may often recognize our own failings and ignoble predicaments in his pages, these facts exist in our own lives, we know, in contexts which are omitted from his books and relieve them of much of their meanness. It is primarily, therefore, other people who appear to us to be mercilessly exposed. This is agreeable until we realize that, after all, it is as necessary to respect and like at least a few other people as it is to respect ourselves. And this Mr. Aldous Huxley seldom, or never, allows us to do. True, there is one character in Point-Counter-Point in whose behalf our admiration is claimed. But Rampion is unconvincingly compared with Kingham in Two or Three Graces, who was suggested by the same model. In the case of Rampion we were asked to take the fineness of his nature on trust: in that of Kingham we were acquainted directly and convincingly with the obverse side of that same nature, its histrionic, suspicious, ruthless egotism. How well that was done! But what is Rampion? A point of view, a conduit-

pipe of theories upon life.

It is not true, as has been said, that there are no amiable people in Mr. Huxley's stories; there are. But the aspects of them to which he attends are seldom admirable, and either chill or make us despise them. Take, for example, Lord Edward Tantamount, the elderly peer whose enthusiasm for science came to him on the wind of a revelation of the obvious, namely, his solidarity with the world and the interconnection of all things: 'It's all like music,' (he said to himself) 'harmonics and counterpoint and modulations. But you've got to be trained to listen.' And who thenceforth, and with a singleness of mind only possible to the pure in heart sits down to correlate phenomena—especially connected with newts. Lord Edward's concentration and his ignorance of the world outside his laboratory were, no doubt, fit subjects for ironic observation; but in the hands of Mr. Huxley he grows gradually into a grotesque old noodle. We forget as we read that he is also worthy of affectionate respect. Take, too, another figure from Point-Counter-Point, Bidlake the painter, twice married, in whose life there had been one relation, broken by death, so perfect that when it ended he could never bear to recall it again, but lived for ephemeral satisfactions on the hypothesis that he would live for ever. In the book he figures as an honest, roughish sort of sensualist, and at last as a hapless victim, whose roots are gradually and painfully wrenched by disease from the common compost in which he had imbedded his talent. That after all significant incident in his life is confined to a sentence, while what is presented in the novel is his depressing defeat: Sanitas sanitatum omnia sanitas-so much for robust old Bidlake, who was

good at seeing feminine contours in the landscape. The same point could be illustrated by Mr. Huxley's handling of his flibberty amusement-hunters such as Mrs. Viveash. They are not so bad as they appear in his pages.

I can imagine the author interrupting me here by saying: 'Well, since my characters have apparently suggested that to you, I don't see ground for complaint.' To which I would reply: 'It is a matter of emphasis. You always leave to my imagination to supply what is amiable or exhilarating, while employing your skill in fixing my attention on what is not.' What is the explanation? This is a question which the analyst, confronted by Mr. Aldous Huxley's work, must attempt to answer.

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Before attempting to do so it is necessary to define his position in the world of letters. For although his limitations are not inevitable consequences of his peculiar gifts, they are affiliated to the qualities which make his work important.

No one can deny its importance to his contemporaries; and the interest which it has roused confirms it. He has succeeded in recording modes of feeling and thinking characteristic of his own generation which have never been described before. He has made his contemporaries more aware of their own responses, moral, amoral, æsthetic and intellectual; their indifference, impatience, obtusity, disappointment, sensibility. He has diagnosed subtly and mercilessly the diseases of modern self-consciousness, and described the ignobly comic falsifications of emotion which result from them. But this is not for the critic the central fact about him. His distinguishing mark is that he stands out as the most deeply and widely

cultured of modern novelists. I am not sure that even in the past one can point to any other writer of fiction who has made so obstinate an attempt to illumine his picture of life with criss-cross lights drawn from an equal familiarity with contemporary knowledge and theory. George Eliot only comes near him. It is one of the great merits of Mr. Wells that his imagination has absorbed his knowledge of science, but Mr. Wells is far from being a cultured man in other respects. The peculiarity of Mr. Huxley's work is that not only science in all its branches is laid at moments under contribution, but also the history of art. music, poetry, medicine, society and philosophy. What is disconcerting is the contrast between the extraordinary many-coloured richness of the light he pours upon his subjects, and the fact that they are taken from small and often stuffy corners of the big common world of experience. He is the most universal of novelists in his references and one of the most limited in focus. His constant theme is love and sex, and the result of his investigations is dissatisfaction, or more positively disgust. The two questions which he continually asks are what is the right attitude towards sex-attraction, and is it all-important, or unimportant, or of moderate importance? This preoccupation he shares with his age, which is thinking as hard and confusedly about sex as the one preceding it thought about religion. Hence the peculiar interest of his fiction to his contemporaries. No one in his senses could say that sex was a small corner of experience; it is, after all, the staple theme of fiction. But it is either the falsifications of emotion by self-consciousness or the dullness of mere promiscuity which he studies. The failure of the intellectually honest to fall in love romantically, or the failure of the frankly canine to get satisfaction without romance are

aspects of sex he has made his own; and he has done them extraordinarily well—the lovers who try to drag their feelings up to emotional heights, and those who, equally fatally, endeavour to satisfy instinct without committing their emotions. He is a merciless analyst of emotional playacting in love; that tendency to pretend one feels like someone else or like some character in a book. He is the student of 'Bovaryism' in all its forms. Those who are not interested in his drift either enjoy, or detest, his careful lubricity, for his skill in the rapid suggestion of such scenes is equal to that of Anatole France. To those scenes he owes not a little of his popularity, though they are not the substance of his work.

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Point-Counter-Point is the most ambitious of his novels. but he does not achieve in it more than he had done in Antic Hay. That book also took us from scene to scene in which different characters were interpreting experience, chiefly amorous, according to their different sense of values. The effect was desolating, though often amusing. The title Point-Counter-Point suggested that he had hoped in this later book to make the music of humanity audible: 'It's all like music; harmonics, and counterpoint and modulations'. But we heard only distressing confusion. The author had not pulled the world together in his own head any better than in Antic Hay. That feat so necessary to the artist, who, if his work is to have balance must pretend, at any rate, that he has done so, is one of enormous difficulty to him. To begin with he cannot pretend, and no novelist is more sensitive to the inconsequent queerness of life, and the inconsistency of what is happening simultaneously in every moment of experience. His scientific awareness makes it harder still for him to unify his impression of life, except as a patternless confusion in which any sense of proportion is as good as another, and all moral judgements equally valid. Intellectually, therefore, he is entirely sceptical, but temperamentally he seems to be one who is driven into making passionate, not to say acrimonious, distinctions. It is this perpetual discord between the indulgent scepticism of his intellect and the severity of his uncorroborated reactions, that is responsible for that acrid discontent which emanates from his fiction, shot though it is with gleams of beauty.

In Point-Counter-Point he has borrowed a device from M. André Gide, an author who is in a similar predicament. Mr. Aldous Huxley introduces a novelist into the story who resembles himself. Like the uncle in Gide's Faux Monnayeurs, 'Philip' is both an actor in the story and a spectator. The passage in which 'Philip' meditates on board ship upon his own art is instructive to the critic.

The heart was Burlap's speciality. 'You'll never write a good book,' he had said oracularly, 'unless you write from the heart'. It was true; Philip knew it. But was Burlap the man to say so, Burlap whose books were so heartfelt that they looked as though they had come from the stomach, after an emetic? If he went in for the grand simplicities, the results would be no less repulsive. Better to cultivate his own particular garden for all it was worth. Better to remain rigidly and loyally oneself. Oneself? But this question of identity was precisely one of Philip's chronic problems. It was so easy for him to be almost anybody, theoretically and with his intelligence. He had such a power of assimilation that he was often in danger of being unable to distinguish the



assimilator from the assimilated, of not knowing among the multiplicity of his roles who was the actor. The amoeba, when it finds a prey, flows round it, incorporates it and oozes on. There was something amoeboid about Philip Quarles's mind. It was like a sea of spiritual protoplasm, capable of flowing in all directions, of engulfing every object in its path, of trickling into every crevice, of filling every mould and, having engulfed, having filled, of flowing on towards other obstacles, other receptacles, leaving the first empty and dry. At different times in his life and even at the same moment he had filled the most various moulds. He had been a cynic and also a mystic, a humanitarian and also a contemptuous misanthrope; he had tried to live the life of detached and stoical reason, and another time he had aspired to the unreasonableness of natural and uncivilized existence. The choice of moulds depended at any given moment on the books he was reading, the people he was associating with. Burlap, for example, had redirected the flow of his mind into those mystical channels which it had not filled since he discovered Boehme in his undergraduate days. Then he had seen through Burlap and flowed out again, ready, however, at any time to let himself trickle back once more, whenever the circumstances seemed to require it. He was trickling back at this moment, the mould was heartshaped. Where was the self to which he could be loyal?

The female missionaries passed in silence. Looking over Elinor's shoulder he saw that she was reading the Arabian Nights in Mardrus's translation. Burtt's Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science lay on his knees; he picked it up and began looking for his place. Or wasn't there a self at all? he was wondering. No, no,

that was untenable, that contradicted immediate experience. He looked over the top of his book at the enormous blue glare of the sea. The essential character of the self consisted precisely in that liquid and undeformable ubiquity; in that capacity to espouse all contours and yet remain unfixed in any form, to take, and with an equal facility efface, impressions. To such moulds as his spirit might from time to time occupy, to such hard and burning obstacles as it might flow round, submerge, and, itself cold, penetrate to the fiery heart of, no permanent loyalty was owing. The moulds were emptied as easily as they had been filled, the obstacles were passed by. But the essential liquidness that flowed where it would, the cool indifferent flux of intellectual curiosity—that persisted and to that his loyalty was due. If there was any single way of life he could lastingly believe in, it was that mixture of pyrrhonism and stoicism which had struck him, an inquiring schoolboy among the philosophers, as the height of human wisdom and into whose mould of sceptical indifference he had poured his unimpassioned adolescence. Against the pyrrhonian suspense of judgement and the stoical imperturbability he had often rebelled. But had the rebellion ever been really serious? Pascal had made him a Catholic-but only so long as the volume of Pensées was open before him. There were moments when, in the Company of Carlyle or Whitman or bouncing Browning, he had believed in strenuousness for strenuousness' sake. And then there was Mark Rampion. After a few hours in Mark Rampion's company he really believed in noble savagery; he felt convinced that the proudly conscious intellect ought to humble itself a little and admit the claims of the heart,

aye and the bowels, the loins, the bones and skin and muscles, to a fair share of life. The heart again! Burlap had been right, even though he was a charlatan, a sort of swindling thimble-rigger of the emotions. The heart! But always, whatever he might do, he knew quite well in the secret depths of his being that he wasn't a Catholic, or a strenuous liver, or a mystic, or a noble savage. And though he sometimes nostalgically wished he were one or other of these beings, or all of them at once, he was always secretly glad to be none of them and at liberty, even though his liberty was in a strange paradoxical way a handicap and a confinement to his spirit.

'That simple story of yours,' he said aloud; 'it

wouldn't do'.

Elinor looked up from the Arabian Nights. 'Which simple story?'

'That one you wanted me to write.'

'Oh, that!' She laughed. 'You've been brooding over it a long time.'

'It wouldn't give me my opportunity,' he explained. 'It would have to be solid and deep. Whereas I'm wide; wide and liquid. It wouldn't be in my line.'

'I could have told you that the first day I met you,' said Elinor, and returned to Scheherazade.

Clearly there is little that the critic can tell Mr. Aldous Huxley about his work that he does not already know himself; but this passage contains much that his critics should remember. They must accept him as a writer not 'deep' but 'wide'. They must accept the fact that, since his supreme merit lies in width of reference, in putting facts in juxtaposition which his omnivorous reading and

perpetual reflection have assembled, his novels and stories must perforce be disquisitions illustrated by characters. The deep pleasure in reading Mr. Huxley lies in following the movement of his mind. He is aware also of the irritation produced in some readers by his inevitably discursive methods. There is an amusing self-critical bit of dialogue on this point between 'Philip' and his wife. They are driving in a motor and they have just run over a dog.

'It was his fault,' said Philip. 'He wasn't looking. That's what comes of running after the females of one's species.'

There was a silence. It was Philip who broke it.

'Morality'd be very queer,' he reflected aloud,' 'if we loved seasonally, not all the year round. Moral and immoral would change from one month to another. Primitive societies are apt to be more seasonal than cultivated ones. Even in Sicily there are twice as many births in January as in August. Which proves conclusively that in the spring the young man's fancy.... But nowhere only in the spring. There's nothing human quite analogous to heat in mares or she-dogs. Except,' he added, 'except perhaps in the moral sphere. A bad reputation in a woman allures like the signs of heat in a bitch. Ill-fame announces accessibility. Absence of heat is the animal's equivalent of the chaste woman's habits and principles...'

Elinor listened with interest and at the same time a kind of horror. Even the squashing of a wretched animal was enough to set that quick, untiring intelligence to work. A poor starved pariah dog had its back broken under the wheels and the incident evoked from Philip a selection from the vital statistics of Sicily, a specula-

tion about the relativity of morals, a brilliant psychological generalization. It was amusing, it was unexpected, it was wonderfully interesting; but oh! she almost wanted to scream.

Not unnatural, but still Elinor's 'desire to scream' was not a good criticism. Mr. Aldous Huxley's loyalty is committed to 'a cool indifferent flux of intellectual curiosity'. It is his point; it makes him unique among English writers of fiction. He is an Anatole France, only far more learned, who has not attained to the suavity of indifference. He is therefore more interesting, but less successful as an artist.



## READERS' REPORTS

#### THE MAKING OF A DANCER

Theatre Street: the Reminiscences of Tamara Karsavina. (Heinemann. 25s.) Madame Karsavina's book of reminiscences was announced just when the Russian Ballet, or rather the little of it that we know in Western Europe, appeared to have died with Diaghileff. And so one was prepared to find a funeral oration delivered over his work. But in fact her book has very little to do with the days when 'Nijinski était roi et Karsavina fée'. Instead, she gives us a vivid and unexpected picture of the life of a girl vowed to the theatre almost to infancy. She describes the secluded life and monastic atmosphere in which a Russian ballerina was formed. '... we were kept from contact with the world as from a contamination,' she writes. 'Having to face life one day in its most alluring guise, we were brought up in almost convent-like seclusion. As I look back now upon my school-days, I see that our up-bringing, despite its seeming absurdity, fully vindicated its wisdom. If lacking the stimulus of actuality, we were spared the sordidness of life; and the rarefied air of discipline was a proper school for temperament, inasmuch as it concentrated its growth on one single purpose.'

That rarefied air and concentration developed, in Karsavina at least, a spirit of religious seriousness which had its share in making the dancer she became. 'I slept on my back with arms crossed, because I thought it was a holy attitude'-such divine simplicity, amounting at times almost to primness, was a facet of her deep respect for her art. It formed the instrument which later Diaghileff

knew how to use.

With her introduction to Theatre Street, Karsavina became a part of the ballet machinery; and it was her good fortune to belong to that machinery at a time such as the Russian Ballet had never seen before. She saw the end of the Empire and the beginning of a new era: she took her part, often an arduous part, in revolution political, technical, and administrative. While her actual training as a dancer went through three distinct periods: first the French, for Petipa's star was just waning as Karsavina rose to the top of her profession. The Italian revival followed, when Pierrina Legnani enraptured Russian balletomanes by sheer virtuosity, and the senior class was put into the hands of Cecchetti. Here is Karsavina's description of the Italian prodigy:

Legnani walked into the middle of the stage and took an undisguised preparation. The conductor, his baton raised, waited. Then a whole string of vertiginous pirouettes, marvellous in their precision and brilliant as diamond facets, worked the whole audience into ecstasies. Academically, such an exhibition of sheer acrobatics was inconsistent with purity of style; but the feat, as she performed it, had something elemental and heroic in its breathless daring. It overwhelmed criticism.

Later Karsavina went herself to Milan to acquire that diamond-like precision, and she writes with affection of the Italian ballet-mistress Signora Beretta, and her devout pupils who 'called on "Madonna mia" at every difficult step'.

Fortunately, neither the Imperial Ballet nor Karsavina rested there: the Russian revival followed, with Fokine and Golovine and Bakst, and a host of Russian talent. No longer content with a formal development, they made

the ballet something living and dramatic. The conventional ideas about costume were discarded, and bewildered ballerinas found their contours altered and themselves weltering in an orgy of colour, and 'regretted their voluminous tarlatans, starting from the waist-line'. Fokine's leadership at the Imperial Ballet roughly coincided with another influence, that of Isadora Duncan. Karsavina was by now sufficiently experienced at once to admire and to criticize this other great dancer; and her comments upon teaching, stimulated by Duncan's theories, illustrate the insight she possessed into the essential requirements of any art.

Her art was personal by its very nature, and could only have remained so. Through my own experience I realized that teaching is not the conveying of your personal knowledge to the pupil, neither is it to model the pupil after your own individual shape. Teaching of art can only be based on what the consecutive achievement of the ages has built up—technique, in fact.

Karsavina's comments on Duncan throw as much light upon her own personality as upon the American: 'She had created no new art. Duncanism was but a part of the art to which we held the key.' Fokine vindicated this claim with his first ballet, *Eunice*, written as a direct tribute to her, but 'with a far greater range of movements than those at the command of Duncan or her pupils. It was possible for us with our training to have danced as she did, but she, with her very limited vocabulary, could not have emulated us.'

Madame Karsavina is very reticent. It is mainly indirectly, through her comments on other people, that one

learns something of her own personality. But she has chosen to show the forming of a dancer rather than of an individual. Only now and then does she vouchsafe odd glimpses of how the monastic seclusion of Theatre Street reacted upon her outlook. 'Paris to me was a city of eternal pleasure, dissipation and sin.' 'It is a pity that my puritan intolerance of those days made me tear in small pieces Marinetti's book.' The first chapter, she tells us, was entitled 'Le Viol des Négresses'. No wonder her brother called her laughingly, 'my famous and virtuous sister'.

In 1909 Karsavina's history passed from Eastern to Western Europe, from the quiet security of the Imperial Ballet to the delirium of Diaghileff's first season at the Châtelet: 'casting in my lot with his was to bid farewell to my peace of mind'. Her development was now identified with his work, and these chapters have a special interest for readers in this country. Her admiration for those she was now working with is spontaneous and ungrudging; Nijinski, 'the Eighth Wonder of the World', Lopokova, with her 'unique blend of eagerness and naïveté', and, of course, Diaghileff: 'I had seen a Japanese performer once, exhibiting feats of quadruple concentration. I failed to be impressed by him: I had seen Diaghileff at work.'

But the valuable part of her book is after all the story of her Russian life; partly because she is describing an existence without parallel in this country, partly because of the insight and imagination she brings to her task. Like Tchekov, she uses slight, almost irrelevant, detail to give life to the events that she describes.

May was cloudless; cherry orchards dressed in bloom

covered the hills round Prague. In a close-fitting Amazon-like dress and a hat with drooping feathers I thought I looked fatal and mysterious. My mirror sent me back a happy smile in which there was no mystery.

Our home-made costumes must have been pretty clumsy, but they were the apples of my eyes. As I possessed no trunks, I travelled with my costumes in my hand, wrapped in the old Bokhara shawl of many hues.

And Lopokova, the dancer, lives authentically in this episode:

Young Lopokova danced this season; it was altogether her first journey abroad. As she was stepping out of the railway carriage, emotion overcame her. She fainted right away on the piles of luggage. It had been her dream to be in Paris... the lovely sight (of the Gare du Nord) was too much for her.

The Russian Ballet and Karsavina herself burst upon Western Europe, full-fledged and dazzling. Their audiences knew nothing of the long tradition, the devotion and sacrifices that had perfected the art of dancing in Russia. Karsavina's book throws a fresh light upon the achievement of the Imperial Ballet, and upon her own achievement, while for future balletomanes it will preserve a clearer vision of one great dancer than most members of her profession enjoy. 'Ephemera of a brief summer, great dancers leave no record but a pious legend.' Karsavina, more fortunate than her predecessors, has made a book which will be remembered for its picture of an existence possible, perhaps, only in the Russia that

has departed, and for its story of the making of one whose 'pious legend' will rank with that of Guimard, and Taglioni, and Nijinski.

FLORA GRIERSON

Journal 1929, by Arnold Bennett. (Cassell. 7s. 6d.) Readers of the three sequences of Things that have Interested Me (1921-26), and of the two rarities printed under the same (or almost the same) title in 1907-8, will find here a menu of similar type. From its varied attractions they may select a number of succulent items: a critical account of a cocktail party, with a sad dénouement in the last sentence; a day's racing; some mild visions of the Riviera; a visit to Bart's Hospital; numerous animadversions on strong drink and the demerits of certain unlucky hotels; a mag-

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nificent story of an archbishop (p. 55); three separate and detailed criticisms of nursing-homes; a sudden and tantalizing view of Moscow; and a study of the varied physiognomy of London shoppers. But best of all are two or three glimpses of the novelist at work, and the mental processes of a hard-working artist. 'A novel in process of creation has to be lifted up. It may have to be lifted up again and again. The large mood for it has to be recaptured. . . . To work this miracle there is nothing so efficacious as the sight or hearing of a great work of art—any art. Many times have I gone into the National Gallery, or to a fine concert, not primarily to see pictures or to hear music, but to recover the right mood. An artist engaged on a work ought never to read or see or hear second-class stuff.'

Did we compare this collection to a choice of good dishes? More still, it suggests the flicker of a vivid cinema, with Mr. Bennett as the engaging and ever-victorious hero involved in a series of civilized adventures. Once an observer always an observer: and if you have a humanity as broad as his, it will never desert you. One warning, however, must be issued to purchasers of the non-limited edition. The dust-wrapper imprints on the hand of the reader a positively indelible stain of a rather pleasing green. But even this peculiarity has its value. It may serve to bring a thief to justice—a thief who must surely be forgiven, on the merits of the case.

Back Door Guest, by Lennox Kerr. (Constable. 7s. 6d. net.) There is no one word applicable to those men who wander about the earth, who chase horizons across seas to countries, and across countries to new seas. 'Hobo' won't do: it brings into mind the work-timid tramp who calls at

the back door. The word should be more inclusive than 'hobo', and suggest a vice. Books about these people are usually disappointing: the true spirit is elusive, and it is not part of the nature of the men who are burdened by it to write. And those who manage to escape from this compulsion of wandering and set down their experiences seem to grow self-conscious, affect the style that they think should apply, like the public repentances of Revivalist converts. Here, in Back Door Guest, is a rare exception. The writer has a very rich field of experience to draw upon, and he is the true author; whatever life he had led he would have written. Mr. Kerr is a sailor: he jumped ship in New York and wandered haphazardly across to the Pacific Coast, doing all sorts of work from cook's mate in a Lake steamer to bartender and beer-maker in a

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low-class speakeasy, suffering every kind of hardship which he describes, alternating gibes at himself, with a style strangely Russian in flavour—a kind of gay despair—with perpetual hopes for different to-morrows. He dreams of glorious careers, relapses into apathy, kicks himself out of it with self-satire, and dreams again. He finds himself becoming overwhelmed with the tramp mentality, and for a while watches himself listlessly sinking into deeper listlessness. Here the book becomes sombre with cruel realities. At the end we leave him signing on a ship that he thinks is taking him to England, but discovers it to be going on an Arctic trip.

Life of this kind tends to make men brood over the social evils they encounter, but Mr. Kerr's two digressions as a reformer are commendably clear-headed—not mere indignation. His description of the conditions of the sailor's life should open the eyes of many who still think of the 'jolly sailor' in terms of romantic haziness, and not as the sweated and unfairly treated worker that he is. It is time that something of the kind was written, and for this chapter alone, *Back Door Guest* deserves all the circulation it can get. While his chapter on speakeasies and the effects of prohibition on the working classes is positively terrifying.

The chief blemish in this book is its occasional self-consciousness, but I am sure this is due to a lack of practice in expressing emotions, while some of the humour, too, is a little over-deliberately 'put in'. These are faults that should vanish. I look forward to forthcoming works of Mr. Kerr.

LIFE AND LETTERS

F. L. LUCAS

## DEATH'S JESTER

'Alors s'assit sur un monde en ruines une jeunesse soucieuse. . . . Et ils parlèrent tant et si longtemps, que toutes les illusions humaines, comme des arbres en automne, tombaient feuille à feuille autour d'eux, et que ceux qui les écoutaient passaient leur main sur leur front, comme des fiévreux qui s'éveillent.' This is not a picture of postwar Europe; at least, not of our post-war Europe. The words are all but a century old. Thus wrote de Musset, middle-aged already in his twenties, just as Byron had been 'a perfect Timon, not nineteen'. Even in his impudent little comedies, at moments, the same cry of anguish makes itself suddenly heard. 'Ce que tu dis là,' exclaims Fantasio's friend, 'ferait rire bien des gens; moi, cela me fait frémir; c'est l'histoire du siècle entier. L'éternité est une grande aire, d'où tous les siècles, comme de jeunes aiglons, se sont envolés tour à tour pour traverser le ciel et disparaître; le nôtre est arrivé à son tour au bord du nid; mais on lui a coupé les ailes, et il attend la mort en regardant l'espace dans lequel il ne peut s'élancer.'

It was no mere affectation. No doubt youth is often affected; but youth is also often bitterly sincere. No doubt it was a mood; it passed, as moods do; but it is curious to find that the last century, which we tend to picture as

populated by brisk business men with a blind confidence in God, themselves, and Progress, could be in its early twenties, as well as in its nineties, thus fin-de-siècle. Yet can we wonder? There are dawns, indeed, when to be young is 'very heaven'; the morning after is apt to be less celestial. Then the young pass from excessive enthusiasm to excessive melancholy, feeling that they have been born out of due time and are making their first bow on a stage when all is over.

It was natural that the generation which came to birth with the nineteenth century should feel this disillusion. There seemed nothing but a puppet-show left in progress in the theatre of the world. It had been otherwise for their fathers. The Werthers had forgotten their own sorrows as they beheld the earth alight with Liberty, and the Rights of Man coming in glory on the clouds of Heaven. Like clouds, indeed, those Rights had vanished; in their place had risen in the same year, 1804, the pale stars of René and Obermann; but in their place also had ensued for twenty years, terrible and yet magnificently Titanic, a Battle of the Gods. Full disillusion was kept at bay. War was still romantic then, however misguidedly; a field for genius, not merely for the muddling mediocrities that floundered through the slime of our last conflict. Some may recall the vivid narrative of a Piedmontese private in the Grande Armée—how, at the mere sight of that short grey-coated figure riding down the line before Moscow, he found himself breathing as hard as if he had been running, and bathed in sweat amid the cold of a Russian winter's day. It was not thus that we felt about the Generals of 1916. But after the romance, and then the epic, there followed now this poor farce of rejuvenated kings and reactionary governments. This was what the

generation that had heard through boyhood the guns of Austerlitz and Jena and Wagram, sat down to contemplate as they and the century together came of age. And so there were other caged eaglets in these years besides the Duc de Reichstadt; other smouldering firebrands, lit too late, besides the heroes of Stendhal. The enormous energy of a Balzac, a Dumas, a Hugo might go trampling onward under that leaden sky, after the last baleful splendour of Byron had fallen from it like a final meteor; but others of the young, with less vitality, felt weighed down by this load of emotional, as well as political, reaction. Smaller writers, like Maxime du Camp, bear out de Musset's description; and though in England, so much less touched by the war and now at length victorious, we should not expect the same aftermath, it may be more than coincidence that so few writers are to-day remembered who were not either over twenty-five or under twelve—too old or too young to be vitally impressionable —when the year 1820 closed. In prose, between Carlyle (born in 1795) and Thackeray (born in 1811) the only names of any note are Macaulay (who would have been hard to damp in any age), Mill, Newman, and George Borrow. Similarly there is a gap in the lineage of English poets between the birth of Keats in 1795 and that of Tennyson in 1809. Such speculation about literary vintage-years must remain fanciful; yet there is one poet born between Keats and Tennyson who was certainly cramped by a despondency like de Musset's, due in part, no doubt, to his own temperament, but partly also, I believe, to the time. Thomas Lovell Beddoes came into the world in an evil hour for him, on a July day in 1803.

That the grandson of Richard Edgeworth and son of Dr. Beddoes should be eccentric, can surprise nobody,

steadying as it might well seem to have Maria Edgeworth for an aunt; but between him and his elders there is one great difference. He lacked, not their energy—he could drudge like an emmet at anatomy, then throw down his pen to take a vigorous part in revolutions and conspiracies—but their unquestioning self-confidence. To Richard Edgeworth and Dr. Beddoes the world was on the whole a friendly sort of place, to be succeeded here and hereafter by another better still. They thought well of it; they thought well of themselves; they were all the more successful in consequence. Certainly they were much happier. 'Edgeworth', said a contemporary, 'must write, or he would burst.' And Edgeworth did not burst. 'Her conversation,' wrote Byron after meeting his daughter Maria, 'was as quiet as herself; no one would have guessed she could write her name. Whereas her father talked, not as if he could write nothing else, but as if he thought nothing else was worth writing.' The Richard Edgeworths, if not their hearers, are happy after their fashion. Similarly Dr. Beddoes had bounded about with tireless zest and an undivided soul from bleaching negroes to blackening Mr. Pitt. Like Browning, he had been one that 'marched breast forward'. True, it is not easy to march in any other way—a point which Browning seems not to have quite considered; but at all events Dr. Beddoes marched; and discovered on the road many odd. and some useful, things. But when we turn to his son, the author of Death's Jest-Book, the contrast is complete. In every apple of his Tree of Knowledge lay a little black wriggling worm of doubt. More gifted as an anatomist, said Blumenbach, than any pupil he had had for fifty years—as dazzling a poet, in his sudden flashes, as the whole century brought forth—he yet perished by his own

hand at forty-five, leaving to Dr. Ecklin a stomach-pump and to the world only a wild heap of poetic fragments, blood and sawdust mixed with diamonds.

Left fatherless in his sixth year, the boy was sent at fourteen to Charterhouse. Long afterwards, when Beddoes was dead, his friend Kelsall extracted strange tales of his doings there from a certain C. D. Bevan who had been his fag. Two of these details have been repeated by Sir Edmund Gosse and Mr. Lytton Strachey-the boy's habit of declaiming speeches from Elizabethan drama at the little Bevan, who was forcibly enlisted as accomplice, enemy, or mistress, with a rain of kicks or caresses as required; and his vengeance on a certain locksmith, whose bad work was repaid with a dramatic interlude composed and recited for his benefit, and depicting his death-bed of horror-stricken remorse, his funeral, and his consignment by a legion of devils to the Bottomless Pit. But there are other less-known anecdotes from the same source, too characteristic, I think, to be forgotten. The inborn oddity, the rebelliousness, the eldritch humour, the Gothic grotesqueness, the love of Elizabethan poetry, the strange mastery of words—all these qualities of the poet we know, are already shadowed here at Charterhouse. Already he dominated his fellows; the nicknames he invented stuck like burs; his defiance, too, of authority had already begun. When the traditional liberty to play hockey in the cloisters was abolished, young Beddoes, who normally never played at all, appeared to lead one side in the now forbidden game, his head bedizened with feathers and his body adorned by a paste-board shield where shone emblazoned a clenched fist, with the motto: 'Manus haec inimica tyrannis'. This demonstration proved too much for the gravity of the authorities and

the prohibition was dissolved in laughter. But if Beddoes could uphold the oppressed, he could also do his share of oppression. Readers of The Newcomes will recall how the old pensioners at Charterhouse were called 'Codds'. and Colonel Newcome himself, 'Codd Colonel'. Three of these old brethren the young Beddoes particularly loved to torment—'Codd Curio', whom he called so because he collected curiosities; 'Codd Frolicsome', a Trafalgar veteran who had St. Vitus's dance; and 'Codd Sinebreech' who was slightly crazed in the head. These old gentlemen, who were attended by the most Gampish of nurses, suffered such persecutions from their enemy that Codd Sine-breech was fain to hire a drummer of the Guards as reinforcement. Hostilities were not, however. continuous; every now and then both sides indulged in armistice feasts of oysters and lobsters, gin and porter, at which Beddoes would dance or give some of his dramatic recitations. Another prank of his was to purloin all the fire-irons from the kitchen of the preacher's house, so that the infuriated cook went about cursing in a vain search for his pokers, tongs, and shovels; these were mysteriously restored at midnight, tied round the neck of Beddoes's fag, who was himself tied to the door-knocker with a resulting din, as the little boy struggled there, like a dozen coal-scuttles falling downstairs.

The same familiar imp of insubordination attended Beddoes to Pembroke College, Oxford, where he treated his fellows with cold aloofness and the college authorities, by Bevan's account, with 'a course of studied impertinence'. On one occasion, we are told, a lecturer, tired of seeing him sitting and glowering in complete inattention, exclaimed: 'I wish you would at least cut your book, Mr. Beddoes'; at once the young man rose, walked out,

and returned with the largest butcher's cleaver money could buy, with which he proceeded to do as requested. The ensuing uproar brought the lecture to an untimely end. Few, too, who have come upon it, will forget that deadly stab, that poisoned 'jewel five words long', in one of his Oxford letters: 'Mr. Milman (our poetry professor) has made me quite unfashionable here by denouncing me as "one of a villainous school". I wish him another son.'

Such things are slight, no doubt. But only in such glimpses does Beddoes loom upon us for moments, like a lurid fog-bound sun, out of the mists which have engulfed for ever the secrets of his inner life. We catch sight of the young poet, with his strange physical resemblance to Keats, helping to print the posthumous verse of the still neglected Shelley, whose aery spirit had so strange an appeal for his own earthy one; or scribbling imitations of Elizabethan drama with a power that seems to spring from him full-grown; or stealthily hacking the pages of his first published volume from the bindings of the copies on his friends' shelves. Then there appears for a moment the young law-student, working at Southampton under that most poetic of solicitors, Kelsall, who was to struggle with heroic resistance to keep alive the memory of Beddoes's work for a generation after its author's death and up to the eve of his own; next, the young doctor, learning to prefer 'Apollo's pillbox to his lyre' and Germany to England; growing into a stoic, prosaic grim anatomist, and yet still turning at instants from skull and scalpel to retouch the everlasting Death's Jest-Book; and last of all the obscure revolutionary, hunted from Bavaria to Zürich, from Zürich back to Germany, then deported in turn from Hanover, from Prussia, and from Bavaria once more. He has by now almost forgotten his country; his

rare visits only inflame his indifference into active irritation with 'this dull, idle, pampered isle'. He has become more and more bizarre; his talk shows a morbid preoccupation with death's-heads and skeletons; sisters and cousins object to his habits of lying in bed all day, drinking perhaps (or, as he called it, having 'neuralgia'), and then prowling like a spectre about the house all night. Was he sane, this sombre recluse whom the Procters one evening found struggling with the attendants at Drury Lane Theatre, which he had been trying to set on fire by holding a lighted five-pound note under a chair? There must have been sighs of relief among the Beddoeses of Bristol and Birkenhead when this disreputable relative went back to cutting up dead Germans at Frankfurt. There he now lost his health, by pricking his hand during a dissection; and lost his heart in addition to a young baker called Degen, whom he was set on turning into an actor, hiring the theatre at Zürich for him to play Hotspur. The rest is well known. The inhabitants of Zürich looked coldly on the heroics of Herr Degen; Degen in his turn grew cold towards Beddoes and went back to his dough in Frankfurt. The poet, bearded now and looking 'like Shakespeare', removed in deep despondency to Basel, where he tried to kill himself, first by stabbing his leg, then by tearing off the bandages in hospital, until the limb gangrened and had to be amputated. He recovered. in body, and seemingly in mind as well; Degen, too, had been persuaded to return to him. Yet as soon as he was well enough to go out, he took the opportunity to procure poison, came back to the hospital, and died unconscious the same night (26th January 1849). In his bosom lay a pencilled bequest of a stomach-pump and a case of champagne: 'I am food for what I am good for-worms

... I ought to have been among other things a good poet. Life was too great a bore on one peg and that a bad one.'

But though Death's Jester lay now quiet at last in the cypress-shade of the hospital-cemetery at Zürich, the jest was not ended. His works remained, to become in their turn the tennis-balls of chance. His family wanted them safely destroyed—all except those of a harmless medical nature. Only Zoe King, the cousin who is said to have felt for him an attachment he could not return, and the faithful Kelsall resisted this proposal; and, through Kelsall, Death's Jest-Book appeared in 1850, followed a year later by a volume of poems. But a new generation of writers had appeared by now; and the world of 1850, watching the birth in swift succession of works like David Copperfield, Wuthering Heights, and In Memoriam, had no eyes for this odd relic of the unknown dead. Only a few observers saw that something new had been added to English poetry; but among them were Tennyson and Browning. Years passed; Kelsall, devoted as ever, heard of Browning's admiration, met him (1867), begged him to write a preface for a new edition, sent him some of the manuscripts, offered to bequeath him all. Browning accepted; he contemplated, at a time when he seemed likely to be made Professor of Poetry at Oxford, giving his opening lecture on Beddoes. But nothing came of it, neither preface nor lecture; Browning had grown bored; and Kelsall, too, was growing old. In 1869 he made, with Zoe King, a pilgrimage to the scenes at Basel and Zürich where Beddoes's life had guttered out twenty years before; in July 1872 he contributed an article on the dead poet to the Fortnightly; three months after this 'last stroke for Beddoes', as he called it, he too was dead.

The manuscripts duly passed to Browning, with a

message from Mrs. Kelsall revealing to him what had been hitherto kept dark-that Beddoes had died by his own hand. This grim addition made the poet of optimism more disposed than ever to play ostrich and forget the whole affair. The box of yellowing papers acquired in his eves a sinister horror. Another decade went by; then he talked of it to his young neighbour, Edmund Gosse; and finally, one day in 1883, led him to the locked box, pressed the key into his hand, and fled. However, once Bluebeard's Cupboard was open, Browning's repugnance weakened sufficiently for him to read over the manuscripts with Gosse; who in consequence produced a new edition of the Works in 1890, followed by two more volumes of Letters in 1894. But, half a century after his death, misfortune still dogged Beddoes. The edition was perfunctorily carried out; and the manuscripts, returned to Browning's son at Asolo, disappeared in the confusion that followed his death. Mistresses and manuscripts, as the sons of the Bishop of St. Praxed's perhaps discovered likewise, do not always go together; it is said they vanished together in this case; no one knows what scented tresses of some dark Italian beauty, faded now in their turn, the papers of Beddoes may have perished at last to curl. Finally, two years ago (1928), Gosse produced a grandiose new edition of the Letters and Poetical Works. ornamented with decorations from Holbein's Dance of Death; but before its completion he too died; and with this new edition reappeared, alas, the errors and corruptions and mutilations of the old. Beddoes might well have laughed in his grave.

Not that it is much easier to know what the poet was really like, than what he really did. The letters are eccentric, cold, impersonal—all the more impersonal for being filled with a great deal of bitter badinage. His jests serve him, one feels, for shield as well as sword. That sardonic smile makes his face more than ever of a mask. Poetry, Anatomy, Liberty—he pursued each in turn, to disillusion at the last. There is little trace in his life of affection, apart from the mysterious Degen: 'I fear I am a non-conductor of friendship, a not-very-likeable person, so that I must make sure of my own respect.' And yet this coldness has an air of being studied rather than natural. There is a Byronic pose in his saturnine description of his behaviour on a voyage to Hamburg-how he 'remained impenetrably proud and silent every wave of the way, dropping now and then a little venom into the mixture of conversation to make it effervesce'; and this impassivity is belied by passages in his poetry of a quivering tenderness:

Your love was much, Your life but an inhabitant of his.

Cyrano, Cyrano,
I yearn, and thirst, and ache to be beloved,
As I could love—through my eternal soul,
Immutably, immortally, intensely,
Immeasurably. Oh! I am not at home
In this December world, with men of ice,
Cold sirs and madams. That I had a heart,
By whose warm throbs of love to set my soul!
I tell thee I have not begun to live,
I'm not myself, till I've another self
To lock my dearest, and most secret thoughts in;
Change petty faults, and whispering pardons with;
Sweetly to rule, and oh! most sweetly serve.

Surely, if the writer of that lived withdrawn into his shell,

it was precisely because he was sensitive, and had suffered. He seems as if part of him had perished young: his very portrait as an undergraduate has a mummy-like air; he resembles his own Wolfram, a dead thing in a living world, gentle once but hardened now. Certainly the letters show him, if no lover, at all events a good hater. He has a particular dislike of British Philistinism, whether singly in persons like 'Mr. Milman', or in the nation as a whole:

Drink, Britannia! Britannia, drink your tea, For Britons, bores, and buttered toast, they all begin with B.

O flattering likeness on a copper coin, Sit still upon your slave-raised cotton ball With upright toasting-fork and toothless cat.

But, for that matter, the whole world sickens him: 'I am now so thoroughly penetrated with the conviction of the absurdity and unsatisfactory nature of human life, that I search with avidity for every shadow of a proof or probability of an after-existence both in the material and immaterial nature of man.' One may wonder that a mind which found this life so tedious, should so sigh for eternity; but in such matters the human temperament is seldom very logical. Gnawed by the worm on earth, it speculates hopefully about the worm that never dies.

Still, if the letters throw but a glimmer on the poet's heart, they reveal very clearly those two qualities of his brain which go to make his poetry at times so astonishing—imagination and wit. Even as a child, his first favourite poet had been Cowley. And to read these letters brings home with fresh force how hardy a plant real originality

is. Such a mind, read what it may, imitate whom it will, imposes as invincibly as a distorting mirror its own queer quality on all its reflections. It was a gift Sterne had; it belongs in our own day to Mr. E. M. Forster-who else but he would behold the United States, for example, with the most spontaneously innocent air in the world, as a brightly-coloured apron tied chastely round the buxom waist of the American Continent? So with Beddoes. He too was born with this gift of seeing in every square a fifth corner; no doubt he cultivated his oddity, finding it succeed; but it always seems a natural part of him, as if he had had a mandrake for a comforter in the cradle and made it his youthful hobby 'to chat with mummies in a pyramid, and breakfast on basilisk's eggs'. 'There is nothing of interest in town,' he will write, 'except a pair of live crocodiles in St. Martin's Lane.' 'I will sacrifice my raven to you,' he answers, when Kelsall recoils from the sinister menagerie of Death's Jest-Book, 'but my crocky is really very dear to me.' This is, indeed, one of the few expressions of affection in his whole correspondence. Or again: 'Such verses as these and their brethren, will never be preserved to be pasted on the inside of the coffin of our planet.' Such excessive preoccupation with the macabre may seem affected; yet the reader who looks back at that cadaverous portrait, and forward to the last scene at Zürich, must surely admit that the affectation, if such it was, went deep. But his fancy does not always glimmer thus coldly like a glow-worm on a grave: its flames can dance gaily enough, if still perhaps with a slight breath of sulphur: 'Dear Kelsall. I have been in the native land of the Unicorn about a week. . . . I had no time to visit Procter . . . but am told that he is appointed to a high office in the government of the Kingdom of ye Moon';

such is Beddoes's way of conveying his own arrival in England and Procter's new Commissionership of Lunacy. Or he will write home of a castle at Göttingen: 'The date of the tower is said to be 963: if this be true, it may have earned a citizenship among the semi-eternal stony populace of the planet; at all events it will be older than some hills which pretend to be natural and carry trees and houses.' Just so might another metaphysical physician have brooded two centuries before; we should feel how typical was the thought in a letter written home by Sir Thomas Browne to Norwich. But there is a more flashing fancy than Browne's at work in Beddoes's vivid description of fireflies at Milan: 'as if the swift wheeling of the earth struck fire out of the black atmosphere; as if the winds were being set upon this planetary grindstone, and gave out such momentary sparks from their edges'. It might be a description of his own poetry. How many poets one might search from cover to cover without finding anything as brilliant as this round grindstone of a world!

Those, then, who know the poetry of Beddoes will have no difficulty in recognizing the fainter shadow of his genius that lies across the pages of the letters; but there is one more disillusion here than even the poems show—disillusion about his poetry itself. He early expresses a sense of failure; he feels that he is trying to animate a corpse, that he is but the ghost of an Elizabethan dramatist, squeaking and gibbering plays fit only for audiences long lapped in their winding-sheets. 'The man who is to awaken the drama,' he writes of a remaniement of Massinger's Fatal Dowry, 'must be a bold trampling fellow—no creeper in worm-holes—no reviser even, however good. These reanimations are vampire-cold—we want to see something that our great-grandsires did not know.' He

must have felt the relevance of that judgement to himself; and if he is severe on his contemporaries, prophesying after Shelley's death 'nothing but fog, rain, blight in due succession', he is still harder on his own work: 'I am essentially unpoetical in character, habits, and ways of thinking: and nothing but the desperate hunger for distinction so common to young gentlemen at the University ever set me upon rhyming, (rather in the same way, it may be remembered, he denied himself a heart). Death's 7est-Book he dismisses as 'entertaining, unamiable, and utterly unpopular'. He finds himself wanting in the two indispensable qualities of a dramatist, 'power of drawing character, and humour'; indeed at moments he feels 'doubt of my aptitude for any higher literary or commercial occupation'; he cannot even finish his plays—'as usual I have begun a new tragedy'; 'a new tragic abortion of mine has absolutely extended its fœtus to a quarter of the fourth act'; 'those three acts, which I cannot possibly show to any eye but that of Vulcan, are absolutely worthless'. What wonder if this hesitating Prince of Denmark begot no second Hamlet, but only dramatic fragments and brilliant incoherences?

And yet I know no poet whose poetic moments are more crammed with poetry. How much one values this sort of spasmodic writer depends on temperament—whether one is 'classical' and asks for ordered beauty of form, or 'romantic' and cares for flashes of dazzling colour. But, after all, why not love both? Beddoes can only give the second kind of pleasure; but he gives it so intensely, that I feel he is undervalued still. What he needs is a good selection of short passages, often of single lines. The anthologists have merely concentrated on a few of his lyrics, which have the sort of prettiness dear to

their pussy-cat mentalities; just as they persist in representing, or misrepresenting, the author of 'The City of Dreadful Night' by the cockney amenities of 'Sunday up the River'. As a lyric poet Beddoes can be lovely; but it is in his verse dialogue that he shows his strength—not only that power of phrase and image with which his letters vibrate, but something also that they could not reveal—his mastery, even rarer, perhaps, of that Proteus among metrical forms, so simple-seeming, so mockingly elusive in a hundred poets' hands—dramatic blank verse.

The strange thing is that his most living poetry is a pastiche of dead work. As a contemporary of Keats, writing in the manner of 1820, he is usually unreadable; it is as a contemporary of Webster, risen from the dust of two centuries, that he quickens into a quivering vitality. His Muse is a Witch of Endor, her magic a necromantic gift of waking to utterance a tongue long buried. Yet this becomes a little less strange when we remember how Chatterton too, hopeless when he writes in the poetic style of 1770, found himself only by escaping back to an England older still than Beddoes ever revisited. And think, too, of the whole Renaissance with its aping of the classics. There are poets who can write vitally of, and in the style of, their own age; there remain others for whom it is equally essential to escape from it. Generations of critics have lost their heads and tempers squabbling which is right. Surely both are. Surely it is understandable that a poet may wish to break away to some magic islet of his own, where he can feel himself monarch of all he surveys, because he shares it only with the dead. For they do not cramp our style as the living can; we can learn from them without fearing to become too imitatively like them; and the older the dead, the easier they are to elbow

aside when we turn to write ourselves, as if their ghosts wore thinner and more shadowy with the years. Distance can lend enchantment also to the voice.

At all events it is on borrowed plumes that Beddoes soars his highest, and when masquerading as a Jacobean that he seems most himself. No one else since Dryden has so recaptured the splendour of blank verse as a medium for dialogue, escaping that marmoreal stiffness which Milton brought. For it is, indeed, almost as if the author of Paradise Lost had turned the verse of Hamlet into stone; to be carved and built by him and others after him into shapes of monumental nobility, but never again to seem like living flesh and blood, as once in Elizabethan hands. Milton's 'organ-voice' has no vox humana; and musical as a Wordsworth or a Tennyson may be, Shakespeare's Cleopatra speaks what has since become, rhythmically, a dead language.

Beddoes alone seems to me to have rediscovered the full secret of varied stress and fingering, feminine ending and resolved foot in all their elasticity. His lines run rippling like wind along the corn: his Muse moves like his own Valeria—

She goes with her light feet, still as the sparrow Over the air, or through the grass its shade.

All the stranger is the contrast which combines with this perfect grace of rhythm such a grimness of ideas; until his verse recalls that tragic conception of the Greek—the Gorgon Medusa, 'the beautiful horror', the lovely lips twisted with eternal pain:

I have seen the mottled tigress Sport with her cubs as tenderly and gay As Lady Venus with her kitten Cupids. So, too, the Muse of Beddoes, dagger and poison-cup in hand, goes gliding on her way with the light feet and swaying grace of Herrick's loves in their wild civility:

The snake that loves the twilight is come out, Beautiful, still, and deadly.

But now some lamp awakes, And with the venom of a basilisk's wink Burns the dark winds.

O that the twenty coming years were over! Then should I be at rest, where ruined arches Shut out the troublesome, unghostly day, And idlers might be sitting on my tomb, Telling how I did die.

You're young and must be merry in the world, Have friends to envy, lovers to betray you, And feed young children with the blood of your heart, Till they have sucked up strength enough to break it.

I will go search about for Comfort, Him that enrobed in mouldering cerements sits At the grey tombstone's head, beneath the yew; Men call him Death, but Comfort is his name.

The poison is given with a caress: the dagger tickles before it plunges home. It is interesting to compare the rhythm of Beddoes with the dramatic verse of another master of the metre in its statelier narrative form, Tennyson:

I once was out with Henry in the days
When Henry loved me, and we came upon
A wild-fowl sitting on her nest, so still
I reach'd my hand and touched; she did not stir;

The snow had frozen round her, and she sat Stone-dead upon a heap of ice-cold eggs. Look how this love, this mother, runs through all The world God made—even the beast—the bird!

Any ear must notice the difference. Not only are the individual lines in Tennyson more regular and so more monotonous, and also slower through their avoidance of the feminine endings or extra syllables which lend speed to a verse like:

And feed young children with the blood of your heart;

they also for the same reason refuse to coalesce with one another into a verse-paragraph, in spite of the author's effort to make them do so by ending his lines with words like 'upon'. Each decasyllable somehow persists in scanning itself separately with a sort of conscious pride in its own virtuous avoidance of any undue licence. It is as if the passage were being written by a poetical type-writer, which very beautifully rang a little silver bell at the close of each line, and pulled itself elaborately back to begin each new one; whereas Beddoes has the sinuous onward gliding of a living adder through the grass. Open Webster:

#### O Men

That lye upon your death-beds, and are haunted With howling wives, neere trust them, they'le re-marry Ere the worme peirce your winding sheete: ere the Spider

Make a thinne curtaine for your Epitaphes.

The kinship needs no pointing out; metrically, indeed, Beddoes may often seem even nearer to the slightly decadent softness of Fletcher or Shirley than to Webster's harsher rhythm; but in his diction he shows the same swift and bitter strength:

I have huddled her into the wormy earth.

Let Heaven unscabbard each star-hilted lightning.

Get swords that pierce the mind; a bodily slice Is cured with *surgeon's butter*.

Of the two supreme excellences of Beddoes, then, as a poet, this power of rhythm and of phrase seems to me one; the other is his sheer force of imagination. He has ideas that are poetic in and by themselves quite apart from their expression; like the silence of Ajax before Odysseus in Hades, like the symbols of Ibsen in his later plays. Indeed, the cry Beddoes wrings from the lips of one of his characters might well be his own:

I'll go brood And strain my burning and distracted soul Against the naked spirit of the world Till some portent's begotten.

It is a typically 'metaphysical' conception. Yet he escapes that frigid ingenuity which has so often been fatal to poets of this kind, in the seventeenth century, and in the twentieth—clever persons, who have yet been so simple as to suppose that their creations could live and breathe without a heart. Thus Beddoes, thinking of Noah's Deluge, sees it, characteristically enough, through the eye of the daisy on which its first raindrop fell; but he feels also for the daisy itself with the tenderness of Burns.

I should not say
How thou art like the daisy in Noah's meadow
On which the foremost drop of rain fell warm
And soft at evening; so the little flower

Wrapped up its leaves, and shut the treacherous water Close to the golden welcome of its breast.

Time itself may be twisted by his visionary hands into a thing of space, with all the tortured ingenuity of a Donne—and yet one does not really have a sense of torture, so much does his mind seem at home in its own strange labyrinths:

I have said that Time
Is a great river running to Eternity.
Methinks 'tis all one water, and the fragments
That crumble off our ever-dwindling life,
Dropping into it, first make the twelve-houred circle,
And that spreads outward to the great round Ever.

Or again:

I begin to hear

Strange but sweet sounds, and the loud rocky dashing Of waves where Time into Eternity Falls over ruined worlds.

It is this unusual power of at once thinking so abstractly and seeing so concretely, that makes him a master of the macabre. For the macabre only too easily becomes a little vulgar: Poe can be frightful in quite another sense of the word than he intended. Cemeteries are no very healthy dancing-ground for the Muses, and not much real music has been got from bones. But Beddoes, though he has his lapses, has learnt that the hinted can be far more terrible than the crudely said. In one of his scenes, for instance, a festive gathering is haunted by spectres:

There were more shadows there, than there were men.

Or again, a plague-infected air becomes, before his vision,

Transparent as the glass of poisoned water Through which the drinker sees his murderer smiling.

What a concentrated brevity of horror is there—as if the picture were drawn on the thumbnail of the assassin! Or again, the earth's roundness—what is its cause? The answer of Beddoes is all his own:

Ay, to this end the earth is made a ball— Else, crawling to the brink, despair would plunge Into the infinite eternal air And leave its sorrows and its sins behind.

Here is the old melancholy of Burton, with his speculations on the space Hell occupies in the globe's interior, fermenting in a more modern mind. Why, again, have ghosts and apparitions ceased? There is the same fantastic ingenuity in Beddoes's reply, and the same wild eloquence:

In the old times Death was a feverish sleep,
In which men walked. The other world was cold
And thinly peopled, so life's emigrants
Came back to mingle with the crowds of earth.
But, now great cities are transplanted thither,
Memphis and Babylon and either Thebes
And Priam's towery town with its one beech,
The dead are most and merriest: so be sure
There'll be no more haunting till their towns
Are full to the garret: then they'll shut their gates
To keep the living out.

Such concreteness of vision combined with passionate concentration of speech—it is these two qualities in Beddoes that lend the hiss of an arrow to his single lines of scorn:

The shallow, tasteless skimmings of their love . . .

And scratched it on your leaden memories . . .

And lay thee, worm, where thou shalt multiply.

Indeed, nothing in him has so much the air of being written con amore, as these hot gusts from a furnace-mouth of hatred; it is as if he had taken to himself that cry of one of his characters:

Unmilk me of my mother, and pour in Salt scorn and steaming hate.

The passions he deals in may be often poisoned, but they are at least passion; and lack of that might easily have become the besetting weakness of a poet with so much sheer cleverness, as it is to-day with the young who set out to imitate Donne's ingenuity without his intensity in a way that suggests Blake's Lamb trying to frisk itself into the likeness of Blake's Tiger. Cleverness, it seems to me, has its place in poetry, but only a second place, as the tiring-maid of passion or of beauty; and the cleverness of Beddoes makes his loveliness not inferior, but a more complex, artificial thing than that of Wordsworth's Lucy or Tennyson's Mariana. Not for him

The silence that is in the starry sky, The sleep that is among the lonely hills,

but

Crescented night and amethystine stars.

A violet is not for him a simple violet; it is like

Pandora's eye
When first it darkened with immortal life;

(as if life, like death, or even more than death, perhaps, threw a sad shadow when it came). A pine-tree across the moon turns into a river before his agile gaze:

One snowy cloud Hangs like an avalanche of frozen light Upon the peak of night's cerulean Alp, And yon still pine, a bleak anatomy, Flows like a river on the planet's disk With its black wandering arms.

(And there are persons who deny a visual imagination to be needed for enjoying poetry!) Even a moonlit waterdrop holds for him within it the semblance of a world's unhappiness:

> For what is't to the moon that every drop Of flower-held rain reflects and gazes on her! Her destiny is in the starry heavens, Theirs here upon the ground, and she doth set Leaving her shadow no more to delight them, And cometh ne'er again till they are fled.

Even a lily-of-the-valley becomes a jester with cap and bells, a symbol that motley is the whole world's wear. Thus he follows beauty for ever through a maze, like some hidden Rosamond; he is

the bird
That can go up the labyrinthine winds
Upon his pinions and pursues the summer.

He can turn to lucid grace the image of ambiguity itself:

I know not whether
I see your meaning; if I do, it lies
Upon the wordy wavelets of your voice
Dim as the evening shadow in a brook
When the least moon has silver on't no larger
Than the pure white of Hebe's pinkish nail.

There seems nothing of which he cannot make music; even the streaks of rain seen in dark lines against the blue background of a showery sky become for his fingers the chords of a fantastic lyre. And yet with all his clever elaboration he can be agonizingly simple:

They are both dead, and God has suffered it;

or again:

Now I shall see him
No more. All Hell is made of those two words.

Still, Beddoes is not often thus direct. He writes less of what he sees than of his thoughts in seeing it; what he describes is not so much like itself as like something else; and so a great part of both his strength and his sweetness will be found stored in his metaphors and similes. Like the Lady of Shalott, he watches the world remotely, in a strange mirror; like the Emperor Domitian, he walks, with terror about him, in a gallery of looking-glass.

Magic beauty and terror—as in his style and rhythm, so in his mind and soul, these two seem to me his essential qualities, moving inseparably side by side. It might have been of him that Victor Hugo wrote:

À de certains moments toutes les jeunes flores Dans la forêt

Ont peur, et sur le front des blanches metaphores L'ombre apparaît.

C'est qu'Horace ou Virgile ont vu soudain le spectre Noir se dresser;

C'est que là-bas derrière Amaryllis, Électre Vient de passer.

Only with Beddoes such moments are continual, and in his own pages, too, there are more shadows than there are men. This dualism moulds all his writing,

As out of the same lump of sunny Nile Rises a purple-winged butterfly Or a cursed serpent crawls.

His most characteristic work becomes like a duet between a raven and a nightingale upon a tree in Hell. Now they alternate; now they blend together, as in that lovely picture of a Love who is also Death; a thin, pale Cupid with ragged wings and, for his dart, a frozen Zephyr,

Gilt with the influence of an adverse star.

Such was his weapon, and he traced with it
Upon the waters of my thoughts, these words:

'I am the death of flowers and nightingales,
Of small-lipped babes, that give their souls to summer
To make a perfumed day with: I shall come,
A death no larger than a sigh to thee,
Upon a sunset hour.' And so he passed
Into the place where faded rainbows are,
Dying along the distance of my mind.

At times, again, this duet becomes a duel; and just as in real life 'he could be delightful if he chose' (said Mrs. Procter), 'but, oh, he chose so seldom', so in his letters the sardonic side of him will sneer at some pathetic passage just added to a play, and in his verse his raven will croak derision at his nightingale:

I'll not be a fool like the nightingale
Who sits up till midnight without any ale,
Making a noise with his nose.

Thus at war within, he spared neither his country, nor his contemporaries, nor himself-poor dramatist ironically denuded of dramatic gift! But he was too hard on his own work. It is difficult to read through. I have done so twice, and never shall again. But I return with ever fresh astonishment to his fragments. The unfinished traceries, the ruined aisles of this gaunt sham-Gothic cathedral that he left half-built and roofless to the scorn of Time, will outlast many a neater and more finished edifice; saved by the almost unearthly perfectness of here a carved line and there a sculptured monster, and by the strange owl-light of its atmosphere in which this wild poet wandered to his early and disastrous end. There is often more quintessential poetry, I feel, in three lines of his than in as many pages of other poets not without repute. Only wreckage remains of him; but enough to sustain his memory in that sea of Eternity into which he heard Time's river falling, himself so soon to fall.

He's dead: he died Young: as the great will die: as Summer dies, By drought and its own fevers burned to death.

### MRS. CLEMENT PARSONS

# CORSICA HALL

My Godfather, who lived from 1819 to 1884, carried on an agreeable business in congenial surroundings. He was a bookseller and publisher in an ancient University town.

His bookshop stood at the junction of two narrow, busy streets, each named after its contiguous College. Unforgettable is the picturesqueness of that small-windowed, low, wide-spread shop, with its projecting corner gable. On the external walls, oak beams, time-blackened and deeply striated, traced parallels and crosses between spaces of weathered plaster. No glaring distemper or filigree iron sign announced the shop's antiquity. It quietly looked as it might have looked two centuries earlier.

My Godfather's dwelling-house was half a mile from his shop. A Victorian villa, standing detached at the end of a terrace, it bore the odd, probably inherited, name of Corsica Hall. Here I, as a little girl, and my younger sister, Londoners at home, used to stay once a year with my Godfather, sometimes in Long Vacation, oftener at Easter.

We were seldom invited during term time. Hence, my impressions were chiefly of a cosy town girt round with silent, vacant Colleges that yet in their vacancy and remoteness possessed extraordinary significance, a quality like the stillness of infinite motion. On our morning walks in and out among courts and halls, sometimes we saw a stranded don, with books under his arm and his silk gown afloat behind, whisk through a cusped archway or up

shallow steps into a cloister. That was all, but, like academic figures in some old 'View of — College', or the mention of Tutors and Bursars in my Godfather's talk, it created a world of suggestion. I beheld the University ideally, as Jude the Obscure beheld it. Without, however, any of Jude's anguished yearning. For me the whole of it formed only the sympathetic background to the bookcases in my Godfather's house. In them I found my University.

When, down the tunnel of memory, I regard Corsica Hall, I feel again the warm sunshine that used to flood in through the plate-glass of the long dining-room where we mainly lived. Out on the roads I remember Easter days dry and black, with pinheads of sleet grizzling the hedges and dancing on our woollen gloves. Only in the happy climate of that dining-room I see perpetual morning sunlight so strong as to make the flames in the grate dwindle. Every room was provided, inside and outside, with thermometers, and their owner's leisurely feet never failed to carry him twice a day from window to window to obtain the various readings.

At the time I best remember my Godfather he was of the age men of sixty call middle-aged. He liked to be reminded that twice in his travels' history—once on a Channel crossing and once at Lynmouth—he had been taken for Lord Salisbury. The brooding set of the head, the look of sluggish sagacity, the straight-seeing eyes were there, but nothing was there that resembled the then Foreign Secretary's indications of stored momentum.

Bald as to the front half of his head, my Godfather would produce an Alaska woven skull-cap from a side-board drawer when he had to go about the stairs and passages. He was nervous lest we should smile, and his

face, as he stooped to the drawer, used to assume, as successfully as a face so amiable could, an expression half-furtive, half-defiant, which we saw reflected in the side-board looking-glass. His cheeks were convex and polished, like rosy apples. He was a bachelor with only sentimental regrets.

Like most nineteenth century people he was a rank sentimentalist. He could sentimentalize even on a trade topic. More than once I remember his taking off his gold reading pince-nez and remarking in his pensive tone apropos to a *Publisher's Circular* he had been scanning,

'Now that always seems a pathetic advertisement.'

'What is that?'

'The advertisement of the Bible Society: "Bibles at half price".'

About what lay much nearer his heart than books, his collections of art objects, he felt sentimentally.

'I can't bring myself to part with it, Flossy,' he said to me one day when he had received a tempting offer for a sketch by Cotman he had bought years earlier for a song. There was a moved intonation in his voice. Had he been a man of family none would have better understood the worship of heirlooms.

Over and above the ready moisture in his eye he was actively kind. He thought out pleasure-giving details. To boys and girls he liked he would send, for their birthdays, by post in an envelope, a half-sovereign concealed in a slice of bread. From the moment he met us at the station to the moment he saw us off and handed us a packet of sandwiches—for our journey of one hour—he was continually doing things to gladden us. What trouble he took to ensure our having a sheaf of the finest bulrushes to carry home at the end of a visit! Among many acceptable

gifts he gave me a life membership of the London Library.

Considering how magnificent were his opportunities he was little of a reader. First, in the evenings, he read The Publisher's Circular and, after that, The Bookseller, a similar publication second in value. He looked through all booksellers' catalogues. We used to bring him such catalogues as continued to come to us after the death of a father who had belonged to learned societies. (Incidentally, we children adored book catalogues, always reading them as books from end to end.) Sometimes my Godfather would take up Notes and Queries and read exceptional quiddities aloud. The 'Saturday' and The Academy lay on his back dining-room table, but he said he relied most on reviews in The Athenaum. All this was business, and, due observance to it paid, he plunged with earnest gusto into The Art Journal, The Portfolio, The Magazine of Art and catalogues of art sales.

As regarded the perusal of general literature, he shared the Victorian propensity to nod and 'drop off' after the seventh page. Books of reference of the class of Haydn's Dictionary of Dates and Brewer's Reader's Handbook were, he alleged, his chosen volumes 'to retain', but all the same I used to think them (from my point of view, fortunately) an inconspicuous part of his blissful library. He revered every work by Philip Gilbert Hamerton, but what he truly enjoyed was to keep up his French and Italian by means of innocent, easy books such as his soul no less than his degree of linguistic attainment found congenial. Picciola and Le mie Prigioni, Voyage autour de ma Chambre, Le Conscrit and Un Philosophe sous les Toits-I see these books through the medium of his personal image. He used to whisper their sentences to himself as he read. Judging from frequent quotations from Carlyle in his

fluent letters, his studies, when Corsica Hall was free from our distracting presence, were tougher. But towards languages his turn, if rudimentary, was genuine. In his familiar life he brimmed over with foreign phrases. He called his supper Abendessen, and felt he thereby poetized it. Non mi ricordo he used to murmur when he forgot a fact or date. 'How often have I wished Latin wasn't Greek to me!' he would say. He recommended us to 'think in French'. Kinder! he used to call to us up the stairs.

He had a retentive memory for quaint versicles, which, on emergent occasions, he would recite to us.

I have never seen this favourite of his in a book-

What is lighter than a feather?
Dust, my friend, in driest weather.
What is lighter than the dust, I pray?
The wind that blows the dust away.
What is lighter than the wind?
The lightness of a woman's mind.
What is lighter than the last?
Ah, there, my friend, you have me fast.

The unchivalrous conclusion he balanced by Dodsley's 1

Cries Sylvia to a reverend dean, 'What reason can be given, Since marriage is a holy thing, That there are none in Heaven?' 'There are no women,' he reply'd: She quick returns the jest—'Women there are, but I'm afraid They cannot find a priest!'

<sup>1</sup>Robert Dodsley (1703-64), the original publisher of Gray's *Elegy*, was himself a collateral ancestor of the present writer.

This he specially enjoyed because of the clergy collectively he professed the poorest opinion.

In well-to-do houses of half a century ago frugalities were practised the following generation disregarded. One was the economizing of gas by sitting on winter afternoons fully half an hour in darkness. At Corsica Hall, as we settled round the hearth just after we had to shut our books by a window we young ones did our utmost to keep alive the dwindling stream of my Godfather's chat and comment. But in vain. His handkerchief over his head, his spaniel, George Fox, snoring at his feet, the old man dozed. The purring of the fire grew intensely audible. The dusk deepened. The void in life became insupportable. Would anything ever happen again? We stirred our feet, our chairs; then, contrite, sat a brief while unnaturally still. During the worst ten minutes we almost should have welcomed a caller's ring. When Ann Day, the housemaid, at last came in with the taper, how instantaneously we pushed back our chairs, how we came to life! The dog would lift his head from his paws and wake to the hope of a walk, and my Godfather would sit forward and yawn and pull out his big, white-faced watch. Presently he would rise and say, 'I must be oph'. He would shake his shoulders and profess to be hastening out of the room, or actually would go, warbling 'I dreamt that I dwelt in marble Halls'. But first he would stumble over George Fox, who had moved, and now lay across the doorway, so that, even if freshly overtaken by sleep, he might not miss his master's exit. My Godfather seldom waited tea. Oftener, however, during Vacation, he did not go back to the shop in what he called 'the after part of the day'.

Corsica Hall evenings were pure delight. We sat round

the plain-coloured green table-cloth under the fiveburner gasolier (it was the period of opalescent globes with talc coronals) and only desired not to hear the sounds that presaged the entrance of Ann to lay for 'the evening meal'. We talked of playing dummy whist, but never played—we were too content. We neither went out at night nor wished to go. Once, I recollect, we were taken to hear Bellew read Dickens in character.

All through those curtained evenings we read new books. We learned to cover the binding in thin paper, to cut deftly with long, broad ivory knives shop-new, stiffly opening books. We learned to read inside uncut leaves, to handle gingerly. We read, the open book leaning on others, with waiting books to left and right. Such a wealth of marrowy books as poured forth during the late seventies seems to me unparalleled in present years. Each book we read then was a fresh creation, magical, like Alpine air. The ideas in it streamed direct from the author's imagination into ours.

Arising out of our reading, nothing I set my momentary happiness on knowing was too much trouble for my Godfather to find out. He would pull his beard. 'Perhaps we might be able to work the oracle,' he would murmur when the query involved reference to some third person, usually a don, with whom, as his constant customer, he was on easy terms. I have beside me a long note he sent me on the meaning of 'Igdrasil', another on the Thebaid, another on when and how the date of Easter was settled. 'Let me have a think' was his formula when we put one of our posers to him. He gazed at the carpet while we gazed at him. The 'think' produced, not what we had asked, but the name of the likeliest volume to find it in. Directly after breakfast he used to take down with his

gold pencil on a fresh sheet of note-paper the list of our 'Wants' with as much seriousness and patience as though to attend to our wants were to be the principal business of his morning, and, every midday, one of his errand boys bumped against the kitchen door with the anticipated pile of books in brown paper. Afterwards, at two o'clock when my Godfather came in, he would ask from the hall, 'Have I been able to supply your needs?' Words were inadequate for reply. We used to run to him, seize him round the waistcoat and hug him. Even nowadays I think of him when a tobacco-scented beard comes within range.

Though he might be in the thick of issuing his new catalogue or sending out half-yearly bills, at home he was as imperturbable, as benign, and as interested in us as though things were slack or going smoothly. We knew nothing of his cares. Even of that chief among them, the old, deadly University system of long credits, I never heard him speak. For all he at any time showed of anxiety, he might have been a 'retired' person. The only occasion on which I ever saw him put out was when he broke his umbrella at Neuhausen at the beginning of a month's tour. He could not be persuaded that Switzerland held one worthy umbrella for sale or a repairer capable of repairing the broken umbrella.

He always, I imagine, worked easily and moderately. He used to talk about 'the weary pund o' tow' and refer to Monday as 'Cold Collar Day', but these phrases were catchwords and carried no animus. Probably he had his qualities' defects. He inherited a goodish business from his father, and, I daresay, was supine where others would have been energetic.

He must have told me some of the romances of his trade and shop, but non mi ricordo. His books' contents

were the part I wanted to discuss with him. Almost the only communication I remember on the subject of his business was that if it depended on new, *i.e.* not second-hand, books he might put the shutters up. Quiet, old-fashioned bookselling, a likeable pursuit anywhere, should have been doubly so in a place where authority still held book-learning and the cult of books in almost medieval esteem.

Now and then we called in at the shop, but he did not warmly encourage our appearance there. It was the most old-world shop—not a fake, but the genuine thing—I ever entered. Its floor went up and down hill and its walls were three feet thick. In view of the facts that the ceiling bulged and that, above the shop, room after room was piled high with books, my Godfather periodically uttered a doubt whether, one day in the near future, the floors would not give way. They never did. Those great rafters seemed set to withstand everything short of the act of God or the state's enemies.

Books walled the shop. It smelt of books. It contained no counter, nothing but alleys of books, with a tall desk here and there in the background, and only near the door, which was at the shop's as well as the street's corner, anything that could be called an open space. Customers stood in the alleys, taking down and looking into books. An unobtrusive card, 'Please remove gloves', hung at the near end of each bookcase. My Godfather had a shuddering dislike of seeing, anywhere, anyone black-gloved.

There is a colour, an atmosphere, a gust about a University bookseller's windows that no London bookseller's can match. Inside the small, bright panes of my Godfather's were set in a slanting row the newest of the intellectual books alone. His window dressing appeared simplicity itself, but was based on an understanding of the value of omissions. The month's reviews, erudite treatises he himself published, the latest two or three products of the neighbouring University Press, the fresh volume of poems from a great pen—it was enough. The bindings introduced during the late seventies and early eighties were pictures and poems in themselves. Macmillan's indigo linen with gilt lettering or white label, the grass-green small octavo Tennysons, volumes like Gilchrist's Blake or Swinburne's Tristram of Lyonesse-no elderly book lover can recall without unspeakable memories the passion of anticipation those bindings evoked. For my Godfather's customers there must have been something piquant and additionally winning in the juxtaposition of the 'just out' books—corners sharp and perfect; virgin gold—with the little, ancient window panes in which they were framed.

My Godfather dealt, in the main, with the extremely educated, and his was their favourite shop. A bookseller's grandson and son, he inherited a bookseller's tact and knew when to be silent, when to speak. He possessed a practically flawless title-and-author memory. Experience had attained something so near the prophetic strain that he could, in most cases, rightly predict from which shelf each person entering the shop would ask for a book, before any words were spoken. He was an adept in the delicate flattery of showing a man an édition de luxe and then leaving him alone with it. His pleasant, refined voice, his blue eyes, and, more than anything else, his human and magnetic manner helped him. Also, fellow-townsmen, who knew about everyone, knew he had independent means and was more or less indifferent, and

these facts added prestige. Though invitations to his house were few, he was understood, moreover, to be an art connoisseur and a collector.

A newspaper table, with paper and pens for the use of habitual patrons, stood in a secluded recess of the bookshop, and there, once or twice, I have sat, and listened to the skilful way in which my Godfather dealt with people who came in. He rarely went forward to challenge a newcomer, but gradually became perceptible in the dusky background, occupied with other persons or other matters. There was leisure for finesse in such a business as his in those less hustling times.

I used to wonder, I remember, how the hypercritical, faintly nibbling inquirer was so frequently transformed after a few minutes' talk into a positive, sometimes substantial purchaser. For business purposes, as now, looking backward, I see, my Godfather read exactly enough, and not too much. He had mastered the art of skimming, all valuable to a man of his calling. Equally shrewdly, he expressed preferences but no exclusions. There was no silly, feverish enthusiasm in his recommendation of any book. His bookmanship was superficiality of a high order. Superficiality even I—with something of a pang—perceived it to be when it was thus focussed before my eyes in these revealing dialogues with various types of customers, some, bumpkins indeed, others with minds that their few words convinced me were ampler, riper and more scholarly than any I had ever met familiarly, except in books. Thus, and in a way one would have preferred to ignore, my Godfather's 'shop' (in Browning's sense) threw light, for the sensitive, callow listener at the newspaper table, on his 'house'.

It was always agreeable to hear my Godfather speak

to his assistants, he was so little a slave-driver. Even to the three office-boys ('young Parley', 'Ben', and 'the swivel-eyed urchin'), all, variously—and amusingly—wicked though they were, he was a mild master. I never heard in his voice a trace of the domineering, nor even anything sharp or dry.

Though he read the local daily paper in order to keep himself, as he put it, 'au courant', he took no part in town government and steadily refused to join bodies and committees. In his day, the renascence of municipal sentiment was still far off, while the numerousness of those having axes to grind sickened the better sort. Yet I can believe that judged by a neighbour sincerely interested in an industrial school or organization of charities and not a whit alive to the matters of taste that interested him, he was pronounced a lazy indifferentist, a man without community value.

My Godfather acutely desired to see everybody comfortable and cheerful. He was the usual optimist who cannot realize poverty and disease he never beholds. His temptations were towards tranquillity, the via media (his phrase) and all that congratulates itself in the Plantin Bonheur de ce Monde verse, enchanting idyll of moral mediocrity.

To set him in anything but an amiable light would be a treason to personal memories. 'A hoginarmo like myself', 'An old bookworm', he used to say, in extenuation of his hermit ways, and I think that his over-expressed contempt for aldermen and councillors was connected with morbid and crippling timidity. He spoke of stirring townsmen as would-be importants, grabbers and squabblers, but there wanted not indications that in spite of his words he suffered an unacknowledged envy.

He wished to have in writing the line once quoted before him as

Tantaene animis palustribus irae.

He wished, I fancy, to revert to it as a shelter.

Many people are too dull to be aware of their scantness of life. My Godfather was not of these. 'If one could feel always as one feels after a claret glass of port!' he sighed more than once in my hearing.

At dinner we asked for stories about his morning's customers, and for stories, no matter how often heard before, of Town and Gown, especially of Gown. We loved every legend concerning the august Master who in shaking hands with anybody not a Head offered only two fingers and when he found no one else at a dinner-party sufficiently exalted to take in his wife took her in himself.

My Godfather was no praiser of the inferior clergy. He had often to do with pupil-taking village parsons, bent on acquiring secondhand books below marked prices. The town vicars generally he held in grudging respect. The incumbent of the parish in which Corsica Hall stood —I will call him Dr. Hunnybun—he was better known to us as Monsieur le Curé-used to visit us. With a fringe of white hair surrounding his long, pale face and a jaw that worked up and down when he talked, he resembled an uncoloured jack-in-the-box. He had a trying voice, but in view of the fact that his predecessor had habitually prayed—plumping suddenly down on the hearthrug-when he called, we were thankful for the higher civilization of Dr. Hunnybun and suffered him meekly, especially as my Godfather genuinely liked him. They smoked pipes together. Dr. Hunnybun was Evangelical and loved a missionary sermon. The air inside the

lovely little medieval church that was his seemed always vibrant with Greenland's icy mountains.

My Godfather kept two maid-servants, whose names, by the oddness of coincidence, were Day and Knight. We, however, knew them as Ann and Lyddy: Ann, the middle-aged housemaid; Lyddy, the elderly cook. Twenty pounds wages and help with their teeth was my Godfather's sound rule. He used to talk of paying a dentist a retaining fee for the upkeep of the more carious Ann Day's mouth, but, I think, never carried his suggestion into practice.

Lyddy had (as my Godfather loved to point out to us) a face like a Leonardo. She might have sat for the Louvre John the Baptist. She had the same shaped face and occult smile. In ordinary relations she seemed not one whit occult, albeit given to despondent views and palpitations. I believe the cambric handkerchief she wore folded round her throat in lieu of collar was adopted as a symbol of suffering.

She cooked the best simple dishes I have ever eaten, but of herself we saw far less than of the brisk Ann, who was not picturesque, only trim, womanly and full of blithe anecdote. Ann loved to rally her master, and, on the gramophone of memory, I hear at this moment the shrill, drawn out note on which she produced 'Sir!' when he addressed to her some purposely extravagant statement or professed ignorance of the name of some passer-by to whose peculiarities of appearance one of us had called his attention.

In spite of her outcries against each new purchase, however warily announced, Ann was passing proud of my Godfather's artistic possessions, and 'shone' his Stuart silver cups and salts to the blueness of steel. A Northamp-

tonshire woman, she liked to tell me she came from Spare'em, which I long imagined a name on the map, somehow associated with 'the Wash'. To my elders it was known that Ann came from the town she pronounced 'Houndle'.

Often, between tea and supper, my Godfather, weary. perhaps, of our bookishness, would slip out of the diningroom to sit in the kitchen. I used to hope he did not really want to go there, but was afraid lest Lyddy and Ann might grow jealous. Through the floor, the drone of a man's voice and the sharper notes of women's applausive mirth came up to us. We looked at each other. We felt vexed. humiliated. Sometimes he stayed away an hour. His plea was the necessity of settling the household accounts with Lyddy, who paid the bills. No doubt it was snug below stairs. The kitchen was Dutch in clean brightness and had a high-backed, cushioned settle. A fine round-fronted cupboard, with Lancret scenes painted is the doors, stood in one corner and its mellow varnish caught the glow of the fire. Lyddy's two canaries, shawled at night, hung in the window.

Since our visits took place at Easter or in the 'Long', we saw of the Colleges, as I have said, only the quadrangles and velvet lawns, the gate-towers, the armorial panes, the geranium pots along the sills; we knew nothing of the crossfire of shouts and laughter out of open casements; nothing of the hither and thither of the owners of those little stuff gowns concerning the disposition of which —my Godfather said—the Vice-Chancellor had posted the admonition; 'Carrying the gown is not wearing it'. Left by ourselves to build on Chaucer's Clerk of Oxenford, we should have pictured undergraduates as eager neophytes, circling their tutor as his disciples circled

Socrates, and rapt, nightly, in vigils over Virgil and Aristotle. But Ann Day reported current facts that tended to qualify this vision. Ann's sister, Mrs. Christmas, kept a University lodging-house, and the pranks of the amazing creatures who were Mrs. Christmas's lodgers formed a favourite topic for Ann's historiettes.

In the world of memory the memory of pleasant foods plays, if a blurred, yet a conspicuous part. My Godfather carried his connoisseur's temperament very thoroughly into this region. He had a talent for meals, for breakfasts especially, and, while one dressed in the morning, one looked forward with happy confidence to the novelties his breakfast table would offer.

To us it expressed the very romance of eating. No doubt, the sun that shone so full and warm on it, and the ancient silver, grouped, sometimes round a saucer of dewy violets, sometimes round a tall glass of crisp daffodils, were factors in the charm, but they were (to say the least) powerfully reinforced by the hot, buttery rolls, the matchless boiled sausages, the honeycombs, the superlative mulberry jam, the never-failing fresh fruit in a Madeira basket, the green-shelled ducks' eggs in the Sheffield egg-stand from which it was a little tinkling business of some moments to detach the egg spoons. Even the bread platter and bread knife seemed to us remarkable. My Godfather had bought them in the Black Forest and on the knife was engraved,

Glück und Unglück Freud und Sorgen Sind mein Frühstück Alle Morgen.

These lines he liked to recite, finishing with a sigh.

In no other house save Corsica Hall have I ever seen cake at breakfast, and I felt—agreeably—that here was a link between it and Stoneleigh Abbey when I read in a letter of Jane Austen's from that historic mansion that the Leighs' daily breakfast consisted of chocolate, coffee and tea, plum cake, pound cake, hot rolls, cold rolls, bread and butter and dry toast.

My Godfather and Lyddy possessed the precious art of providing every day something unexpected. In spite of the fact that Lyddy, helped by an open range, was an artist at a Yorkshire pudding, I cordially agreed in my Godfather's dislike of a Sunday sirloin and of what he called 'the Sunday smell' of the unctuous joint while cooking.

In his house a pair of capons more frequently marked the day the Lord blessed. Also, on Sundays, we drank Sparkling Burgundy. 'There's a je ne sais quaw about it,' he used to say, as he poured ours out. And we looked at the rose-pink froth above the ruby champagne glasses and felt reverential.

The bookseller was an amateur of delicate wines. He owned a far from despicable cellar and understood temperatures and bringing to table. 'An Haut-Brion '64, the King of Wines', is a phrase I remember on his lips whenever a bottle of that especial claret came upstairs. All the same, his ineradicable sentimentalism influenced him over and above the vintners' standards. Lieb-Frau-Milch. How languishingly he emitted each syllable! He spoke to us in a hushed voice of Lacrime Cristi.

The place names of wines were music to his ears and in his mouth. 'Try just half a glass of this old Oloroso.' Not while memory holds a seat shall I unlearn the caressing, wheedling murmur in which he spoke it.

A farmer at Clifton-on-Trent sent him one summer a dozen of home-made cowslip. For this he had pink labels printed with the words *Trentthälische Blümlein*, and by this designation always offered a bottle of the consignment. But it was some Imperial Tokay he owned, which, he said, 'picked him up more than any other form of stimulant'. He familiarized me with Thackeray's ballad that brings in

'The Chambertin with yellow seal.'

A little Chambertin that needed re-corking he had sealed with yellow wax for his express delectation.

Under his ordinance the cult of food lost all baseness. White bread, icy butter, carmine radishes and each other separate article on his board acquired a poetic quality. His grossest luxuries were occasional eels which Lyddy stewed by the classic recipe of a College cook.

While calling himself 'a Sybarite' my Godfather was, in the old-fashioned phrase, 'a little eater', and, of an evening, a mere tray, spread with anchovy toast, his halfbottle of Niersteiner and a pear or an orange, sufficed him. After we, at the commencement of a visit, made, once or twice, an eloquently rapid clearance of a repast of this sort, a dish of, sometimes, toasted cheese, sometimes mushrooms or Spanish onions was added, rather, I was sure, under a sense of protest from the kitchen, for I remember Ann tartly telling us we did not 'owe ourselves anything' in the matter of eating. Though he tried to laugh it off and pretend himself a strong and brave man, my Godfather was intensely afraid of his servants. He pampered them greatly, and we used to feel secret vexation when, at the clearing of the table, he would say in a hurried, muffled tone: 'Here, Ann, you together had better finish what remain of those nectarines' or 'of those

peaches'.

Magnifying glasses of various strengths lay on a side table in the dining-room among box editions of Alfred Tennyson, George Macdonald and Jean Ingelow, and. on slow-moving Sunday evenings in the placid daylight after tea, my Godfather loved to look through the glasses. and without them, at water-colour and black-and-white drawings kept in portfolios. To us the high quality of these works meant less than the rainbow enthusiasm he threw round them. I still bear in mind pondering why he called Crome old. How could one be permanently old? I decided—since from paint-box use I knew chrome -that 'Old Chrome' must be a nickname based on the artist's liking for yellow. To me, Constable was symbolized by the 'trait' recited to us with so much gusto of his finding one evening, after his silent, immobile painting day, a field-mouse settled in his pocket. Concerning a Lady in striped peignoir by Watteau, in red chalk, 'The run of her shoulders sets my blood tingling,' he said to his godchild. Ostade and Méryon etchings hung round his dining-room.

The contents of my Godfather's pockets were a continual interest. He specialized in minor apparatus in leather cases. He was the only man I have known who attached his dinner napkin to his coat by a patented silver clip. No sooner was he in a train starting on a journey than he produced a small green bottle, and, more or less surreptitiously, swallowed camphor pills from it. With three pillules of pulsatilla he—and we under his guidance—'corrected' goose, sucking-pig, everything he could call 'rich'. But at any odd time his hand would open and a pillule bottle shoot forth. The 'three pulsatillas' conven-

tion was so fixed that any suggestion of taking four pulsatillas, or two, would, to my youth, have seemed profanation. Of respirators the poor man possessed every recognized variety.

His bedchamber was a large room with three sashwindows looking south-east. His bathroom led into the bedroom, and, in the thin sunshine of spring mornings, there was borne through the two open doors and across the landing to the stair-head a pungent, complex scent, recalling furniture polish and pines, that was the mingled odour of turpentine embrocations and camphorated liniments.

During all the years I knew that rich old piece of still life that was my Godfather he took no exercise other than a short walk. When his cousin, Miss Gotobed, said, 'He used to be a swimmer', we straightened ourselves and looked at him shyly, with a gleam of hero-worship.

Behind Corsica Hall ran a green oblong of garden, too narrow for the house. A crenellated wall divided it from the leafy coverts of a College garden that had been a College garden since 1580, whence the cawings of a rookery were the first sounds I heard in the morning before the chimes of the University Church filled the air. A mulberry tree stood in the middle of our lawn, and when, on sleepy August Sundays, we lay under the tree picking up black mulberries nothing was visible but the summer-blue elms of the College garden and nothing was audible but the mellow jangle and echoing after-hum of bells that might have been ringing out of very heaven.

We thought the back top rooms of Corsica Hall haunted. They seemed full of sounds and of a sense of something. Lyddy thought so too. 'Once or twice,' she whispered, 'something has gone by me on the stairs—like—like cob-

webs'. We thrilled at this and tears mounted to our eyelids. Never for one single evening afterwards in that house did we forget her words.

In front of my Godfather's house lay Cook's Plat—twenty enclosed acres of grass intersected by footpaths. It was an ever fresh pleasure to observe the boys at cricket on it, the dogs and people crossing it diagonally, the wide sky and winds moving above it. Corsica Hall stood at one corner, and, as the road that passed the side of the house led to the Cemetery, we saw many a funeral that went that way.

My Godfather kept a pair of field-glasses in a handy drawer, and when there came a number of empty carriages with a University look about the whole cortège, he would inquire, as he levelled the glasses: 'Who can it be, Ann?' and Ann would reply, 'Law, to be sure, you know, sir, as well as I do. It's old Sadd of Corpus', or, it might be, 'old Greef of Magdalene', to which my Godfather would respond, 'Why, so it is. Ah, poor old gentleman! Another one slipped away into the Kingdom of Souls.' Elapsed a sighing pause. Then he would gaze anew after the hearse, and 'Now he "knows what Rhamses knows",' he would mutter, after which he would wipe his eyes and the field-glasses.

In every room and on every landing ticked an antique clock. My Godfather knew about the insides of clocks—such knowledge was his nearest approach to any exact science. He took a child's delight in keeping his clocks synchronized and at the moment when the hour began to strike all over Corsica Hall he broke off conversation and sat back with listening eyes. A Swiss clockmaker had told him that clocks needed to be looked at for their own well-being, and that every remote, seldom consulted

clock languished, however duly wound, and went wrong. The suggestion contained precisely the flavour of sentimental superstition that would ensure it a lasting place in my Godfather's memory, and he said he firmly believed it.

He was equally an amateur of bracket clocks, chiming clocks, carriage clocks, skeleton clocks. He loved his weight-and-pendulum grandfathers with gut cords. Clocks in general appealed with peculiar aptness to his Longfellow-Dickens vein. In Madrid he had picked up a clock bearing the words: Omnes vulnerant, ultima necat, in description of the hours, an epigram thoroughly to his mind.

In the depths where memory is life I see him touring his house every Sunday morning, clock winding, with two little girls at his heels. Lifting the weights with his hands he would tell us that the advantage of the long pendulum was the regularity and absence of variation in the swing. 'Hicke's law,' he used to say, "As the deflection, so the force".' We did not understand in the least. On one of his clocks sat Galileo with an ormulu globe, and at Galileo's feet lay an ormolu scroll, inscribed E pur si muove, and this gave my Godfather a narrative opportunity. Another he found in an eighteenth century alabaster clock on which, in gilded bronze, Louis XIV pranced on horseback in toga and peruke. We paused next at a clock before which his voice congenially saddened to murmur, 'Here's Pater Chronos with the scythe waiting to strike the ultima ora for each one of us. Myself, first. Then-long years later, I pray God-you together.' Cheerfulness regained him by the time he reached the drawing-room Empire clock in its chased gilt case surmounted by Cupid crowning a nymph. He was, as usual,

in the position of Reynolds's *Garrick*, on one side pulled by Tragedy, on the other by Comedy.

My latest impressions of intimacy with my Godfather are of two foreign trips with him, one to the Bernese Oberland (when he broke his umbrella), the other to Provence a year later. As our lives opened, his began to close. He lapsed more and more into the ways of a recluse, shrinking from leaving his Town, shrinking from initiative and contacts.

In our own home it had long been the custom to mock at his mania for medicaments, his dread of draughts, and from our infancy he had been held up as the incarnation of Molière's *Malade Imaginaire*. This attitude (of which he was painfully conscious) undermined the frankness of his outpourings by letter as to what he never forgot to call his 'often infirmities'—in talk, the natural man would have prevailed. Consequently, the announcement of his death in May, 1884, fell upon me with heavy unexpectedness. At the last, emphysema killed him; he had suffered for years from increasingly severe asthma.

For a long while I could not believe that a friend I had known and loved so well I should see no more. That kind countenance alternately haunted me and refused itself to realization. Afterwards, I heard that at the point of death he asked twice after his absent goddaughter. Still more characteristically (and for this report I was indebted to the homœopath in attendance) he turned, on his last evening, to Ann, and said, speaking with difficulty and pressing his old servant's hand, 'Ah, my dear girl, this time it is pollice verso for me'.

Not till ten years after his funeral did I visit the place where he lived. It was the middle of term, but—How did the City sit solitary!

## THE CAMP

Clipstone Camp a great war training centre Here all is like a dream, half realized, fled in the face of dawn: where men were made conies hold court; in languor unsurmised

Pan lightly rules what iron Mars hath swayed, and where the starlight glimpsed the sentry-steel a moody keeper calls his dogs to heel.

fallen into

Where clarions thrilled, the pheasant's raking cry grates as he stalks along the wagon-ruts now rank with weeds; Time faces Time-gone-by and sees a single file—of bobbing scuts.

is visited and found

Now all is wasted—

the haunt of a little soldiery of fauna Once crowded years,
swift come and wildly spent!
Time would not then forslow,
and Shades cry out—How should grim Time relent
that did so unrelenting go
when every day came crowding on the last?
He went a-trim pranked in his brightest dress,
and now he sighs and gazes on the past
and creeps along haggard with weariness.

and a point of the moral: sic transit gloria mundi The Camp is a preserve: it were in vain to cite declension of the noblest things—that beauty takes corruption's vilest stain, blown roses sink in loam, the dust of kings is wed to fallen lazars: here the Camp breeds from a poorer mould and meaner stamp: gamefowl usurp the whilom haunts of men, bracken has filled the regimental square, the stoat is now its fiercest denizen and plovers all askirl deploy in air.

only a brooding Memory survives The Camp is broken now, and Memory pines: she thrives in glamorous vistas of the past.

The Camp is struck, wind sweeps the ruined lines; Soldier, the hutments are downcast and row on row the useless stanchions rear like arms that crave support when none is near. Around the broken pedestals of stone the spiny bramble curls, lush hemlock speeds—a sullen fire of ragwort overgrown; Soldier, a paradise of weeds.

Now Memory pines, for here where men were made all quitchy growths in parasitic pride luxuriate: and Memory dismayed sees desolation spread on every side, here where the couch-grass whispers to the brier and the newcome furze inclines his golden head and where the poppies tenderly suspire round paths that rang to greet a sterner tread, and broken, ring no more.

and a tenuous mist which seems to grope after the past

The sun is gone a-westering;
pallid Haze
a lank unshapen ghost
creeps round the broken paths
prowling
to find some relict of a vanished host
to snatch an image of the Iron time
that men for hardiment had made sublime:
Soldier (he says), the derring days are told;
a drossy aftermath basely alloyed
crumbles to mould—
the men are sundered and the Camp destroyed.

the rising moon transfigures the mist A darkling wren his brief sweet lullaby peals like a faery bell enwrapt with mist and echoing to itself does make reply among the podded broom; night broods on all and puts the ruined Camp in kindlier thrall. The west that swooned in gold and amethyst darkens and glimmers; but in the east, to mark the moon's uprist, a silvery ocean shimmers.

a spectral Camp arises

I stood within the ruins of the Camp and there a Muse and Memory and the Mist consorted in the wilderness—
a Trinity with power to dress the hutments and the men, a moon-wrought habitation from the past; and through the night old songs came thrilling fast. The Camp arose again all eerily and mist begot with martial shapes of men.

I saw enact a Triumph of dead Time, when forms did rise again as in their prime: for here at midnight, waiving season due, the tucket of the dawn was heard anew.

with Reveille and shortly

Cookhouse

Sick Parade

Show a leg: Reveille—and the sergeant's canticle— Eggs and bacon, birdies. . . . but the regimental hen forgot to lay. Reveille—and a primy waking thought: What ache to-day, what dire and dread disease shall lend his aid to swell the wheezing line of sick parade? No semblance of an ache; the bleaker prospect of a Number Nine. . . (Soldier, the Number Nine!) Roll, roll the oaten pallet: Cookhouse dins, and rissoles call! (Soldier, those Deadly Rissoles. . .)

#### LIFE & LETTERS

Orderly

Once a man
cast in heroic mould
complained
that there were vegetables in his tea:
but it was soup.

Latrine Fatigue duly evaded Then through the mist hove-to an old, old Sweat (progenitor of such as never die) the loathest parcel of a loath fatigue on loathly traffic bent:
 of lurid speech;
his rancour (and addition) forth he spet by thrust of grimy fingers in his throat—
 Corporal, it makes me retch:
 forgive me, Soldier;
 I'll try again another time—
I cannot face these shitten buckets, not to-day . . . Released he went his way to scrounge a blissful hour

and others stayed to empty, swill, and scour.

First Parade

The first parade!
I saw them hastily preparing.
No shave—no razor.
Rusty buttons, lousy straps.
No Soldier's Friend—no tin of polish.
No Time.
Take his name; we'll give him time!

an R.S.M. croons a lullaby in the Square

Now in the squares discordant clamours rouse, and one well-hated voice to the toiling squads:— 'You bloody constipated creaking cows, uppoff your knees you poor fleabitten sods!' (Soldier, the awful voice is heard no more wilting the troops with its infernal roar:

Soldier, the Regimental made them shake!)

rookies at rifle drill But there is tender mammytalk for shambling rookies from doting matrons reft—

Yes, darling, that's a rifle: and, dear, please do use the other left.

bayonet practice at the sacks

then for some

lectures

evening leisure

with the

and the

old 'sermo castrensis' The Camp was brought in panoramic sway through the brief watches of a moonweft day: again the long, the short point, and the jab imperilled unsubstantial hearts, throats, stomachs—wounding the sacks with vitriolic stab or wildly spearing one another's buttocks; then maudlin lectures on the Lewis gun, the rifle-bomb, the gasbag, and field dressings, till jingling mugs proclaimed that day was done and evening shed on all assuasive blessings—all, saving jankers and still-loath fatigues: the rest did aim

some played; some wove their amorous intrigues; some plied their keen epistolary powers; the canteens quaked with boisterous refrain and old songs, dim-remembered, rang again, and scared a scritch-owl gliding round the stack.

And last I heard the rolling-home brigade—some trolled their bawdy catches wobbling back while others sought the dreadnought's timely aid.

to leisure-out the hours;

Those songs are faded now,
that jargon quaint
which spake of rooty, jippo, scran,
and pozzie:
with that brightest song of all,
testament of the fall
of virtue unattaint
for many years—
The Maid of Armentières:
full-blooded and full-throated as of yore,
Soldier, those songs the Camp shall sing no more—
never more.

#### LIFE & LETTERS

till Lights Out A call went quavering down the lines, a plaintive sob from brazen throats:

Lights Out.

The Camp went darkening away that shall be builded never more—
Soldier, the fallen Camp shall rise no more; it passed into an opiate rest

when

it passed into an opiate rest fulfilled with murmurs like a nest:

for the nonce its galaxy was dimmed;

but other sounds and sights than those begotten of the mist arose.

another transformation I saw a draft entrain,
I watched a virile draft depart
for the East;
and one to storm the West:

mouths filled with doughtiness, and smiles to shield the heart, and cheer on cheer went riving through again, into the night shout echoed shout—

into the night shout echoed shout— Soldier, they were aflame,

their young hearts throbbed to join the cataclysm:

an Expeditionary Draft for Mespot Soldier, I saw a Host come thronging here (filling the spectral watches of the night) whose life within a fiery desert flowing poured crimson wealth among the drouthy sere—a choice libation to the thirsting sands, richer than Moslem hordes, or Persian bands, or Legionary valour could afford: between the Rivers, drought in their blackened lips, Soldier, though plague and famine struck and griped and gnawed, they drove the Crescent into pale eclipse.

and one for I saw a deathless Host come thronging here: they waited by as Doomsday thundered near;

the

stood-to and watched a grim tornado's might a dayspring barrage stabbed the scared daylight: quivering but unquelled in the poisoned breath of an iron whirlwind screaming as it fell, they flung fine jests into the teeth of death, and a sundown barrage raised the fringe of hell.

Western Front

The moon that of the mist her children rears raising the ruined Camp at Memory's call, at Memory's call she spans the stream of years and shines where once she shed an ashen pall: and ghostly names, once hateful, now we find come mellowing to the portals of the mind—Bucquoy, Achiet—the Lesser and the Great—Bapaume and Gommecourt where then they stood,

localized

Canal de l'Escaut with a daring freight
that crossed the fearful bridge:
and Havrincourt, the Village and the Wood,
Marcoing and Bourlon Wood and Flesquières Ridge
Saint Python and Solesmes
and many a name

in retrospection's rosy glass to cite: for time can mellow till the past shall seem like the wild figments of a madman's dream,

a strangling horror: and likest the insane to fight within a wood

lending its ghastly echoes to the night.

I stood within the Camp, the moon was climbing fast;
and once she passed

in rich autumnal glory through the sky over a dying wood shell-blasted:

the harvest moon of death on Havrincourt; and there a little stream ran sparkling by, and there the scent of meadowsweet with rankness of decay was strangely blent.

in the ghostly Havrincourt Wood

where

a harvest

Then rose the harvest moon of death—blood red. She sat abrood within the branches bare of any life, for every leaf was dead.

gleamed

The sun's last dying shaft to feed the night she gleaned; like death's pale shield emblazoned there she stinted of blood red for deathly white.

on the sickle

That grim gaunt wood, with death laid to its heart (full of dead trees, dead horses, and dead men) echoed the deathclaps twenty thousandfold

as a moiling knell by lightning hands were knolled: giving stanched wounds to gape and spurt again

Death

and the icy sweat on dying brows to start. Death's avatar! when dim and failing eyes scanning the depth of unavailing skies, groping for comfort in the darkening air,

who is

found but a white-orbed spectre sitting there: the harvest moon of death on Havrincourt.

a grim

Five men sate chatting in a simple row beneath the parapet, and all was still; Soldier, they spake of lice how that the white ones grow on flesh; the little redbacks take their fill out of your veins. With Jerry on the run their world was fairly still: a distant gun boomed intermittently, and overhead

Tester

the whining missile like a perjured soul sped on and on to an uncertain goal.

taking

The time they spent in chat of sundry sorts— Jackson the runner caught it, so they said, and it was rotten being in supports and mopping-up, and getting such big dirt, and dithering, waiting for the strafe to start: and worse to man an outpost such as theirs;

men

and the guns were badly placed brought up by night in haste

at

with the rifling worn and gunners firing short a scapegoat sacrifice between two sides!

their

There were five men, and each his lively shirt:
(and who should guess how close the sniper lay?)
after the hunt each rose his shift to don
in deadly inadvertence:

small-talk

they stood upon the firestep in the firebay—three crouched for life as death came twittering shrill.

and in

Five men sate chatting in a sunken road:
they chased the exiguous chat from every seam,
They scorched the furtive nit in his abode;
Soldier, they talked and talked on any theme—
they filled the gaps of speech with thought unspoken.

ludicrous

They censured Dugout Joe:
a sergeant should not spend his time below
and play at rabbits half the weary day
for rabbits are (they said) as rabbits do;
the vagaries of leave they censured too:
and spake their spate with many a hearty grouse
while ravaging the confines of the louse.
They watched the Sausages come down in flame,
they thought of sweet relief to come that night
(relief for them—and night that never came)
and steaming dixies for too-iron rations!

situations

A hurtling iron bolt, a picral cloud five men lay shattered in a reeking shroud.

but the moon having risen high above the The rising moon that wreathed her misty brood has clomb apace into night's citadel; the nightwind soughs in fitful solitude and moans to the melting Camp a sad farewell: for lo, the spectral hutments and the men born of the haze, in dew resolve again.

the Camp dissolves

A form remains lingering about the furze—Soldier, I knew him well: and now he sways as the nightwind stirs.

one soldier remains

C

discourses

vagaries

WOT

its

lessons

### LIFE & LETTERS

In death twice sanctified he fell:

a wraith in a wraith-spun Camp he spoke to me, half earnest and half jest,

the Fog was in his throat, his voice was hoarse-'We ran—and they have said we ran it well—

a thrilling course

the even and the rough: Soldier, our short careers

were rich beyond all earthly parallel:

it was a miracle in so few years

to pile the spiritual wealth of any age;

to kick a ball when Death stood grinning by;

to take with smiles a hardly-proffered gage;

to mouth horrific oaths when the time was wry; to give to the "spell" and the "rest", each in its place

the best we owned:

to show a placid face when tumult surged within.

Soldier, we learned

that prisoners loping gladly for the cage may find no foster-brothers in the guard

in spite of watches and binoculars;

and a dog's-hind-leg is more than crowns and stars, and soldiers' wealth is "housey" (at the Base)pontoon, or crown and anchor-anywhere: or quarter-mastering for any mob, the pinnacle of war-plutocracy;

that a rail-head dump is not the safest place for hospitals, nor healthy sleep at night.

Soldier, we learned

that forty men were worth eight horses there, that shrapnel, hailing down the middle air,

has strange affinity for the water-tin, proportioned to the ration-party's thirst.

censure of Base Wallahs

'God rest the milder souls that saw from far the lurid angry lightnings of the line:

(O the brave Music of a Distant Gun!)
those that never knew
the unbreathing trance that sheds the Verey star;
that peered into the sockets of Death's face
from the galleries of chalk-pits at the Base.

this, Soldier, would I say,
this, Soldier, would I cite

in trust that men shall yet aspire:
Not that one man should sack a sniper's nest;

Not that one man, to quell a raking fire,
should pledge his single breast
(though that be set in letters of bright gold).

But that men should steal by night
with dangers multifold bestead

burial fatigue after the death by day to bury their own Dead.

and shows

'Now is it well, amid their cups, that men expansively

should set the field and build the line again and talk of limbers, bully, jangling gas-alarms, of Ruby Queens, pulled round a brazier fire,

of spud-sticks and of Mills, of duckboards and of wire;

reminiscent but this should be

as though a man, one utterly forlorn,
were strangled in a dream
and swet great drops of blood

and cried in anguish to the stifled night,

and laughed at his release

inflammatory and said "By God! how stark the pain did seem."

'And here is peace undreamed of:
now the Camp is wrought
a sylvan sanctuary on its ruined sit

a sylvan sanctuary on its ruined site where Shades in visitation sought memorial of the past.

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of the Camp

Rate not the clustering weed that rathely cast his mantle where we trod: for here shall sing in sweet accord the linnet and the thrush; here let the rosebay smile, the loose-strife blush, the lesser bindweed and the greater cling; nor any shot but of the fowling-gun or the fusillade of whin-pods in the sun.

The whining gnat shall pipe a querulous tune to the crane-fly sipping where the dews distil, and moths dance wildly to the waning moon. . . . . . . Soldier, rest!'

and fades

the night

into

His voice was gone: the wind came damp and chill, the night looked on with many million eyes where Woodhouse lay in trance below the hill and sent blue spirals to the dreaming skies.

Clipstone Camp Site

J. A. H. OGDON

[The following notes are added, on certain terms in the sermo castrensis—camp speech—and on certain allusions which might escape the uninitiated: Jankers: punishment drill done 'out of hours'-here, the victims. Rooty, jippo, scran, pozzie: victuals. Chats, chatting: lice; the search for them provided a mild sort of focus for the attention in spare time, helping to ward off the darker mood. Runner: messenger to headquarters, chosen for his agility. Supports: the line in support of the front-line, neadquarters, chosen for his aginty. Suppose the first appose the formal and receiving more of the heavy shells (big dirt). Mopping up: thoroughly investigating a newly taken trench, searching dugouts, etc. Scorched the furtive nit: with the burning end of a cigarette. Dugout Joe: any responsible soldier who was thought to go underground too frequently and stay too long. Sausages: observation balloons, because of the shape. Iron rations: emergency rations; they were often opened and gnawed by hungry men expecting to be relieved. Cage: a wired enclosure for prisoners. Binoculars: prisoners would sometimes give (not always voluntarily) articles of value to their guards, perhaps with the hope of preferential treatment. Dog's-hind-leg: the stripe of a lance-corporal—the newer and lower the rank the more 'uppish' the holder of it. Quarter-mastering: the occupation was popularly supposed to be very lucrative. Railhead-dump: it was not unknown for hospitals in France to be built round a vital railhead; and so when the railhead was bombed, the hospitals also were bombed, and the wartime press had occasion to scream. Forty men: the alternative contents of a railway truck were—HOMMES 40, CHEVAUX 8. Water-tin: the ration party of 'pressed' men was always liable to encounter shell-fire; the petrol tins which contained the water were perhaps likely to be riddled by shrapnel—but also the ration-party had a thirst. Base Wallahs: those with permanent duties well behind the line. Verey-star: an aerial light of powerful incandescence, fired for the benefit of snipers at night. Men doing sentrygo on the parapet were warned to keep perfectly still: this inactivity often proved a remarkable diuretic. Ruby Queens: a well-known ration cigarette. Spud-sticks: a German hand-grenade, something like a potato masher.]

### J. M. ROBERTSON

# THE EFFICIENCY OF FITZGERALD

#### A CAUSERIE

T

In a delightful discourse after a Literary Circle dinner not long ago, it was put to us by an accomplished scholar that Edward FitzGerald, by his immortal version of Omar Khayyam, takes his place as second only to Shakespeare—and hardly even to him—as a master of the poetic use of English words. To an audience receptive alike of Shakespeare and FitzGerald, as most of us still are in the English-speaking lands, the claim appeals almost irresistibly; and it is no ill-conditioned fanaticism that, on second thoughts, moves one to weigh the estimate. For in both of the cases under notice there is at work some kindred gramarye, some spell achieving a common felicity, that might serve to mark them off even from the other masters of that mystery.

So universal, now, is the appeal of FitzGerald, that most of us on challenge confess our wonder that there ever was any unreadiness to acclaim the charm of his Rubáiyát. There seems to be no question of the truth of the record that at first no publisher would take the book; that the editor of Fraser's Magazine obliviously kept the manuscript in a drawer for a year; that FitzGerald finally printed it at his own expense, in an edition of two hundred and fifty copies; that after giving away some copies to friends and finding the rest unsold he donated the entire remain-

der to Mr. Quaritch; and that that master-salesman disposed of them mostly in the sixpenny, or the twopenny, or the penny box. Twenty years ago Mr. Morley Adams proudly mentioned that the once despised and rejected first edition was now worth £30. The other day, a copy sold at £1,400.

That prodigy in literary history figures as an indictment of the taste of the generation on the scene in 1859. How could anybody have read unthrilled that which, in a decade or two, thousands were calling a chime of golden bells, when once the fact had been pointed out by Rossetti and Swinburne and Tennyson and some others who had ears to hear? Yes, it is pitiful; but though probably nothing relatively as good could pass quite unwelcomed in our own day, it seems probable that anything as essentially new to English taste would still find no wide hearing on the instant. For vital newness never finds a ready and a large welcome.

As Mr. Birrell has remarked concerning Hazlitt's lectures, of which the appeal must have been rather more one of manner and mood than of matter, the British public is always too late for these fresh experiences. It was not ready for Coleridge or for Keats: it was even less ready for Keats than for Shelley, who was not ready for Keats's Odes. In 1855 it was not ready for the unprecedented variety of lyric measures and lyric beauty in Maud; and by all accounts, including Mr. D. C. Somervell's, it was not ready for Browning; though later, under the bold baton of Furnivall, it cast up that Browning Society which seems to have been partly responsible for the later reaction. This in turn, by the show of a surface ebb of fashion, has set Mr. Somervell operating on the statistics of the unknown, with unduly pessimistic results.

Once the heedless eyes and ears have been brought to attention, indeed, the zest of tasting is in proportion to the first inertia. And of course we cannot tell how much of the delayed response was due to the sheer dawning charm of the novel cadence, aesthetically perceived, and how much to the simpler reaction of the average educated person to a new utterance of what men idly call Epicureanism, the joy in wine and in the beloved, doubled with the ever-wistful monition of mortality. Omar's is indeed a rare blend of wistful reverie on ever-dying life and debonair discourse on the persisting compensations. And it is all so really Oriental—a special transmutation of Ecclesiastes and Lucretius into what were, as the experts remind us, the static themes of Persian poetry. Similarly, on the other hand, the brief and impotent reaction of orthodoxy was one of resentment of all things pagan. One theologian, inspired by the religion of hate, rabidly aspersed Omar as a crapulous dotard, a rock of offence to the rhetorically pious Puritan of the West. The reading world, placidly passing by, ignored the theologian's invective, and savoured FitzGerald's Omar for the thing he is. And gradually the aesthetic sanction unified the taste for the matter and the taste for the admirable manner, till the Rubáiyát had become an established classic.

Before the century was out, some hopeful spirits thought that the lesson of prompt appreciation had been learned. But was it? Instead of asking again: 'What porridge had John Keats?' let us inquire, What vogue had Henley in 1888? The first edition of the Book of Verses cannot have been large; but to this day it goes for a few shillings, though the collected Poems, after a while, had a fair market. On the appearance of the Book my

friend G. B. Shaw flouted it; and, as we learn from Mr. Cope Cornford, Mr. Yeats told Henley that it was 'not poetry'. Non-poet and poet alike, though both Irish, were thus impercipient of a new mastery; and whereas Henley and Herbert Trench were arguably the greatest rhythmists of that generation, I have not yet chanced to see them thus appreciated, though I trust the valuation has been competently made. The Book of Verses had so few friendly notices at birth that David Nutt, its scholarly publisher, was warmly grateful for one, from a pen not of Henley's critical school.

In sum, a beauty of surprise always takes a long while to become what is called a paying proposition—that is, in England, where paying propositions are understood in terms of a sound and trained mercantile instinct. My lamented friend Alfred W. Benn held that the success won by the second edition of the Rubáiyát came of the added audacities of thought, which in the 'seventies found a new public. But I think that the correct explanation is in terms of the unready awakening of aesthetic sense to a new kind of mastery, as happened for Coleridge and Keats and for Tennyson's Maud. For there had been quite enough audacities in FitzGerald's first version for the digestion of 1869 as for that of 1859; and the spread of neology in religion had not been so rapid as to constitute a basis for a large mass of new appreciation. James Thomson's City of Dreadful Night has not to this day had its due meed, by reason of a deficient intellectual receptivity, though Thomson was in turn no minor master of rhythm and diction. His more sombre and austere challenge lacked the human charm of FitzGerald's.

As to Henley, it may be argued that the intellectual alloy in his total output, repelling judgement at so many

points, accounts for the tepid acceptance of the Hospital Poems and the London Voluntaries; and, further, that the critic who wrote of Browning's product as 'idiotic gabble' was rightly served by a cold-shouldering of his own best. But criticism cannot recognize righteousness in such procedure, even when the greatly loyal Mr. Cornford disserves his friend by putting on a level with the truly inspired work the merely technically laudable Song of the Sword—inspired by the neurotic sentimentalism which was Henley's counterblast to what he saw as sentimentalism—and the turgid and charmless commemoration of Queen Victoria, an exercise in political didactics, full of self-imitation.

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This, it may perhaps be justly protested, is a too excursive conspectus for the brief business of the inquiry as to how FitzGerald reached his artistic efficiency. That the sine qua non was the new form of quatrain, suggested though not exactly exemplified by Omar, is agreed. As Sir Denison Ross well points out, the quatrain, so handled, is a new unit, achieving in its four lines the task so long held to be compassable only by the fourteen-lined sonnet, and achieving it with an easeful and yet inexhaustible cadence which, once perceived, is a pure boon to most spirits capable of rhythmic joy. And, equally with the form, the substance of Omar's thought, the themes of his song, gave FitzGerald the needed impulse to that artistic adventure of which alone he was greatly capable.

For the significant truth is that but for the impulse given him by Omar, whom he in turn has raised to the literary notice of Persia itself as of all the world, Fitz-Gerald would never have conquered a pedestal for himself, as pedestals go. He has done nothing else that is

'inevitable'. The translations from Aeschylus and Calderon testify to his scholarship as to his literary verve; but their arbitrary liberties of rendering achieved no impact even on students. 'Euphranor' is at best an exercise in dilettantism; and a few carefully good stanzas elsewhere do not establish him any more than the hundred good men who have done one or two good but not great things. His taste, though intense, was uncatholic; and some of the best work of his day seems to have left him unmoved. But in Omar, from the first, he had just the kind of material for the intensive perfection which was the ideal of his taste. Every selected quatrain had to be schemed, every line had to be laid, weighed, fitted, and tested. And if in some cases he afterwards reduced a careless felicity to a feebler correctitude, and dropped a number of quite worthy stanzas, in two cases out of three his recastings amount to the perfect cutting of a diamond which at first had been unsymmetrical and unconvincing. The 'Jug of Wine' stanza is a type. Every word is tried, put aside or taken back as is best fitting, till further amelioration is impossible.

To the last he was experimenting, and the crux of 'the dawn of nothing' proved insoluble. He even leaves one or two grammatical solecisms, which he may or may not have perceived. Why indeed the fourth line of quatrain fifty-three in the last edition should be left to run:

To-morrow, You when shall be You no more? where both sense and scansion require:

To-morrow, when You shall be You no more? is a mystery; and though Heron-Allen does not seem to have seen anything wrong, some of us do.

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But these are minutiae; and the residual question is: What is the difference between the gift, or the efficiency, of FitzGerald and that of Shakespeare? Is it not this: that FitzGerald attains a slow felicity by alembication, by intensive selective operation, prolonged and many times revised, on thoughts given or suggested to him by an original which called for the careful handling that scholars bestow on versions of renowned classics? Per contra, it will be urged that FitzGerald's spontaneous letters show him first and last, even in the mood of the moment, the born devotee of the fit expression, the right word, and are in themselves classic in their kind. None will deny it; but the question is of the evolution of the artist in verse; and FitzGerald becomes a Master there only on this basis of a challenging original, with a long discipline of craftsmanship.

In saying thus, there is no more disparagement than in recalling that Virgil or Tennyson would give a day to a line, reminding us that the lord of language is born and made. And ultimately it does not affect our delight in the finished work of art to know whether or not it was long laboured. But the difference between the instant perfection of phrase in one master and the filed felicity of another is a psychic fact to be remembered, standing for two forms of genius. 'What he thought,' Heminge and Condell tell us of their fellow, 'he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers.' Shakespeare evolved from spontaneous fecundity to an unmatched distinction and pregnancy of style; but there is no reason to doubt that the great style in the later work was as instant and unstudied as the exuberance of the first. A spontaneous perfection in which every word is mysteriously right and every great cadence

an 'unspent beauty of surprise', is for criticism, if not more delightful, more deeply and widely significant than the charm of a meditating and calculating art which, rare though it be in excellence, is variously fortunate, and at times tells of the virtuoso rather than of the poet.

And here there is a final structural difference of calibre and of mind. FitzGerald is a 'freak' mind, to use the word without the least disrespect, in a scientific sense. His limitations and his eccentricity, despite his intensive culture in linguistics, are as singular as his sincerity and his rectitude. We cannot think of him as totus, teres, atque rotundus. His eccentricity was abnormal, often fantastic and startling: there is here no large sanity, no universal outlook, no grave enduring vision. Hence the decisive importance of the centralizing stay given him by the stark simplicity of Omar's philosophy of life. Decidedly FitzGerald is not intellectually 'Shakespearean'.

But let not that be our last word on a version which, as Tennyson was one of the first to claim, is the finest, in English, of any foreign master. A quatrain of FitzGerald's Omar, when perfect, is as exquisitely so as a Greek coin of the best period. Thus the English Rubáiyát is a string of a hundred rarely-graven sequins, mostly of very fine gold. How many of them are Omar's is a question outside of aesthetics; and equally so is the question how far FitzGerald altered Omar. It was not his way to leave his originals alone. But when the Golden Treasury editor tells us that the first quatrain is entirely FitzGerald's own, and Heron-Allen shows us that it is not, we contentedly decide that it does not greatly matter—though, as Sir Denison Ross protests, FitzGerald had better have left that quatrain unchanged.

## READERS' REPORTS

#### MARLOWE

The Works and Life of Christopher Marlowe. In six volumes. General Editor, R. H. Case. (Methuen. Vols. I and II, 8s. 6d. and 10s. 6d.) The Arden Shakespeare has long been a stand-by for the student, and for the general reader in need of a fuller commentary than that provided by the excellent Temple edition. In form and design this new edition of Marlowe, prepared by the leading Marlovian scholars under the general supervision of Professor Case, exactly follows the Arden edition. The first two volumes of six have already appeared, the first containing the Life, and Dido, Queen of Carthage, edited by Professor Tucker Brooke, who prepared the Oxford text in 1910, the second containing the two parts of Tamburlaine, edited by Mr. Ellis-Fermor. They appear at an appropriate moment, for there has been widespread curiosity to know more about Marlowe, and widespread research to satisfy it since Mr. Hotson's now celebrated discovery. And they are welcome not only because they incorporate the latest researches, but also because they provide, as a very necessary adjunct to the dry bones of scholarship, a carefully prepared recension of Marlowe's plays and poems.

I suppose it is inevitable that there will be some disagreement among students over the choice of modern spelling and punctuation. In this matter it is impossible to please both worlds. The preservation of ancient orthography, which can be very ugly as often as it is pleasantly antique, is of no great importance when there is no evidence to show that the printed copy was set up from the

author's own manuscript. In either case the chances are that more people will be tempted to read a modernized text. But in the light of recent inquiries into Elizabethan punctuation, in particular the punctuation of dramatic verse, which have shown that there existed an elaborate system of quantitative stopping, devised to assist the actor in phrasing his lines correctly, there is certainly a risk in altering punctuation to conform with modern standards. The general editor of this edition in his preface, and Mr. Ellis-Fermor in his introduction to Tamburlaine, admit a personal preference for original forms, and the latter, it seems, is fully conscious of the responsibility of turning Marlowe's text from an acting version into a reading one. This is, indeed, a big responsibility, since it is clear that the original quartos were very carefully stopped—if not by Marlowe then by one of his associates anxious to preserve his methods-for acting or for reading aloud, not for silent perusal.

It is not an easy thing to write the life of an Elizabethan dramatist: it is the easiest thing in the world to invent one. We know a little more about Shakespeare than about Webster, and a little more about Marlowe than we do about Shakespeare, but when all is said and done the evidence amounts to almost nothing. With infinite pains scholarship has ferreted out a few documents that throw faint beams of light on Marlowe's family, his life at Cambridge and his death at Deptford; it has also digested innumerable documents that have a more or less oblique bearing on Marlowe's associates. Professor Boas has presented them all for what they are worth in his recent book, Marlowe and His Circle, and they have now been incorporated, with a few minor additions, such as wills and attestations, by Professor Brooke in his Life. Professor

Brooke has squeezed the fruit of his researches into Marlowe's origin and career at Corpus to the last drop, but has dealt rather timidly with the closing years of his life. The legend of Marlowe as a violent and vicious character who died blaspheming, is based, like all legends, on a distortion or misuse of facts. But there is no denying his relations with Ralegh's atheistical school and with the sinister gang with whom he spent the last hours of his life. Professor Brooke has not admitted enough evidence on these points, thereby giving his hero a rather more exemplary character than he deserves. But it is necessarily a distasteful task for an editor of Marlowe's plays to introduce them by vilifying the character of their author.

Dido and Tamburlaine are Marlowe's earliest works and closely resemble one another in style; in both the long rhetorical speech predominates, and in both more importance is attached to women than in the later plays. Even admitting the careful workmanship, the finish that differentiates these plays from those of Marlowe's contemporaries and successors, it will be seen, in the concluding volumes of this edition, how far and in how short a time Marlowe was to travel between his first essays in drama and Edward II. Doubtless Professor Charlton, who is editing the latter play, will amplify Professor Brooke's remarks on this remarkable development. In the meantime there is enough to satisfy the most voracious reader in Mr. Ellis-Fermor's illuminating study of Tamburlaine's literary history, and in the long and elaborate commentary with which each volume is provided. T. H.

Spain, by S. de Madariaga. Modern World Series. (Benn. 6d.) The increasing mania for producing in readable form

books dealing in general terms with subjects so vast that volumes might well be written on any one of the chapters has advantages and disadvantages, both of which are apparent in Don Salvador de Madariaga's book on modern Spain. Chief amongst the advantages of this 'Benn's Sixpenny' method is the opportunity it gives to the general reader to acquire for the minimum expense of time and energy some idea of the fundamental problems underlying the subject. The most serious disadvantage is that unless the general reader's interest is sufficiently aroused for him to take the trouble to go into the subject more deeply he has only acquired that most dangerous of information 'a little knowledge'. Don Salvador's book on Spain unhappily falls between two stools. It is neither short enough wholly to escape criticism for the lacunæ, nor can it be accepted unconditionally as an entirely satisfying study of modern Spain.

Within the scope of his book Professor de Madariaga covers a wide field, and indeed the plan he has adopted is an excellent one. He opens with a brief introductory chapter on the racial and geographical characteristics of Spain, and shows, as Mr. Havelock Ellis did in *The Soul of Spain*, how important these factors are in the development of the peculiar individualism of the Spanish race—an individualism which accounts both for the greatness and decline of the Spanish Empire and promises a future when the Spanish spirit will once more play an important part in world affairs, if not through Spain alone, at least through the growing importance of the Spanish Americas.

'What the Spanish character needs is the education and the strengthening of the tendency to give and take and to co-operate. Now, given the pride and stiffness of the Spaniard, such an education can only be attempted by appealing to objective tasks in view, and not by exacting submission to a chief.' To-day, as in the days of Spain's glory, the Spaniard cannot be led by appeals to material wealth and comfort, he needs a more universal appeal, such as was provided during the sixteenth century by the ideal of creating a Christian fraternity. What Spain needs is an external stimulus and this, Professor de Madariaga claims, could be provided by the ideals of the League of Nations.

At this point Professor de Madariaga makes the audacious claim, based on an ingenious, though not wholly convincing, statement that Spain who once controlled a mighty Empire—and controlled it in a far more enlightened manner than she has been credited with—is now in the best position to become the arbitrator of Europe, since her history has given her experience and placed her to-day in a position to take an objective view of international affairs. This is a somewhat precarious argument, since the reader of this book on Spain cannot fail to question whether the time is yet ripe for Spain to take her place as a responsible world power, and whether she has not yet a more important task before her in the settlement of her own affairs.

However this may be, Professor de Madariaga's Spain is a most valuable contribution to the true understanding of that country's importance—an importance that is too often overlooked. It reveals, moreover, Professor de Madariaga's extraordinary power of grasping the essentials of the widest problems. Few writers of English handle our language with more skill than this Spaniard, who gives to it a concreteness, a vividness which it too often lacks when writers deal with political and kindred subjects. In a single line Professor de Mada-

riaga conveys the whole essence of the late Dictator when he likens him to Haroun al-Raschid.

Sanatorium, by Donald Stewart. (Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d. net.) Sanatorium is impressive, largely on account of its quietness: nothing is held back or overstressed. The book is pitched in a key where neither violence nor calculated restraint is needed. It is the story of a young man's eight months in a tuberculosis sanatorium, and his discharge, uncured, with only a short time to live. There is realization of death, approaching at an unalterable pace, surely as any coming sunset, so that the garment of hope that protects the naked human spirit from perishing in the blasts of realities not its own, is stripped away. And yet the manner in which this is conveyed is so quiet, so unpretentious, that one is surprised that so strong an effect is brought about. It is natural to compare any book of this type with Mann's Magic Mountain; Sanatorium attempts much less and, in a way, is more successful.

The hero is a rather colourless young man, and yet one becomes absorbed in his thoughts and sufferings, and when he is seen through the eyes of other characters as an ordinary and unremarkable person, it gives a feeling of surprise. His attitude of resignation appears to belong to a rarer intellectual plane than his thoughts. There is a certain subnormality in the quality of the thought and

emotion.

In books dealing with a character caught up in an isolated small peculiar community, one is often troubled by the lesser characters wandering throughout chapters—mere undifferentiated scenery until the end. Here, however slightly delineated, the nurses and other patients are immediately distinct and recognizable indi-

viduals. Doubtless, there will be many who will decry the 'cough-and-spit' details in *Sanatorium*, dismissing it as 'morbid'. But if books written about sick people must leave out symptoms they had better not be written at all. This is a first novel, although nothing in its writing gives one to think so.

The Art and Practice of Historical Fiction, by Alfred Tressider Sheppard. (Humphrey Toulmin. 12s. 6d. net.) This is a most readable and agreeable book, but neither the title nor the text is in complete agreement with the author's apparent intentions; he seems uncertain of quite what he is going to undertake. Starting with a definition of historical fiction, he quotes many opinions, but his own are not clearly stated, and one is not left with any conception of his real views. And this lack of consistent or enunciated standards of criticism reduces the value of his really interesting matter.

His estimates of the modern historical novel suffer from this vagueness of standard. He omits to mention George Moore's Héloïse and Abélard, which is to my mind the very model and perfection of both romantic and historical fiction. This omission would be understandable if he took the point of view: 'This book is intensely of its period: it seems rather to be of that period than about it: historical fiction is fiction looked at with the historical eye, and nothing else.' One could adopt this definition and say that, while a book like Babbitt falls within such a classification, Héloïse and Abélard certainly does not. This defining is a most difficult matter, and one that Mr. Sheppard should have gone into far more deeply.

Mr. Sheppard is a great admirer of Scott. He says that it is almost impossible for any historical novelist to escape

from his influence. This, I think, is a very doubtful statement, but then, it is extremely difficult to discover in what sense he uses 'influence'. Speaking of Jew Süss he remarks that it has only one good scene, and that (the incident where Naemi throws herself over the balcony) is not original, as there is an almost exactly similar occurrence in Ivanhoe. I find it difficult to believe that Mr. Sheppard thinks that different writers who exploit like situations or themes must necessarily be influenced by one another: but again and again he mentions such purely casual connections between authors, and as if they had a definite significance. I cannot think this a valid critical method.

As one reads one is conscious of continual subterranean rumblings and obscure belchings that seem precursor to some huge eruption or cataclysm connected with Arnold Bennett: and sure enough, in the penultimate chapter, the volcano of Mr. Sheppard's annoyance awakes. But his methods of destruction are not very impressive; Mr. Bennett's views both upon the historical novel and the cosmos are not affected by any amount of quotation from the weaker passages of his less excellent works. True, by far the most pleasant parts of this book are those in which the author is concerned with himself and his prejudices, but this particular chapter is disproportionately irrelevant, and, anyhow, might have been made more amusing.

#### THE TRANSATLANTIC TYPE

The English detective I know, and the French detective I know. The lineaments of Holmes-Thorndyke-Winsey-Gore-Blake are as plain to me as the faces of my friends, and I know every disguise assumed and every tear shed by Lecoq, Rouletabille, and the many men who deploy

around Arsène Lupin. But I have long been looking for the American detective, and till this month had only reached the somewhat barren conclusion that Mr. Philo Vance was not he. Mr. Vance talks like an Englishman-or like what his creator imagines to be an Englishman; Mr. Vance, I think, had a university—not a cawledge education, and Mr. Vance is a perfect model of English gent.'s suiting. But meet Mr. Sam Spade, private dick, who figures in The Maltese Falcon, by Dashiel Hammett (Knopf. 7s. 6d.)! Mr. Spade ain't no college boy; he was raised, I should surmise, in a Chicago joint; he can frisk any coupla crooks or any coupla bulls any time anywhere; he makes love, good thorough-going love, to any jane in the neighbourhood, be she typist, criminal, or wife of his partner; and he finally comes clean and gives the murderous girl in the Artoise frock up to the police, because, as he says, 'I won't play the sap for you.' Whoopee!

Of course one should remember that the United States is a large country. Sam Spade operates in 'Frisco, and maybe Bostonians would think his life a little excessively strenuous. That is as it may be; Mr. Dashiel Hammett is said to be an ex-Pinkerton's man, and if so, he ought to know. If his picture is anything like true to life, it is a minor marvel that such a thing as an ex-Pinkerton's man should exist at all: one would have expected them all to be bumped, slugged, pinked, or pumped full of pills long before they reached the retiring age. But, whether or no, this is an exciting book, a fresh sort of book, written by a man who knows how to write in that strange tongue of his; and it should certainly be tried by all jaded readers of detective fiction. Mr. Spade is romantic, of course, in spite of his dust-cover's claim that his chronicle is 'un-

sentimental crime fiction'—romantic with that mixture of hard-boiledness and he-mannishness which is an American speciality; but the incidents of his life are probably unsentimental enough. His creator has written two other books, which the publishers have kindly forwarded to me, Red Harvest and The Dain Case. The second of these is poorish, overstrained and silly; the first is a story of the 'cleaning-up' of a Western burg whose monniker was Poisonville. It involved, I think, twenty-two deaths; but I may have lost count. It is a vigorous story, but not nearly the equal of The Maltese Falcon. Thus does Mr. Dashiel Hammett give one cause for hope.

After this discovery of a new continent, the eyes of stout Cortez may be a little jaded when they come to gaze upon the English scene. Miss Sayers and Mr. Robert Eustace, in The Documents in the Case (Benn. 7s. 6d.), tell their story in letters—a method not quite so original as their publisher supposes. Miss Royde-Smith used it long ago. Their method of death is really magnificently ingenious, but their grasp of character less so. The sexstarved, slightly demented spinster who contributes so largely to the first part of the book is good; but the young man is absurd, and the Thompson-Bywater couple who serve as protagonists are never allowed to come alive. This book is not one of Miss Sayers's successes, but being by Miss Sayers it is naturally better written and better worth reading than seventy-five per cent of detective novels. Miss Ivy Low has a really charming style, which alone would make His Master's Voice (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.) worth reading. I am not sufficiently acquainted with life in Soviet Russia to say with confidence that Miss Low has added to our repertory another type—that of the Russian detective—but she has certainly tried, and I was

amused and interested to find the anti-Communist turning up as the obvious villain, the counterpart, I suppose, to the wicked Bolshie of the English shocker. The solution is not very convincing, but there are some pretty character-portraits, notably of the street-girl dancer, to be met with *en route*. This is a book which should certainly be read.

Old hands have worked hard for this autumn season. Novels by Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Joseph Gollomb, Mr. Brock, Mr. Fielding, Mr. Bailey, Mr. Philip Macdonald, and Miss Annie Haynes, all lie before me, claiming review. On the whole, Messrs. Fletcher and Macdonald come best out of the trial. Mr. Macdonald is always rather throaty, he tends to charge his books with more romantic emotion than they will hold, and in The Link (Collins. Crime Club. 7s. 6d.) I regret to have to inform him that the link between his wicked American and his wicked Canadian was obvious from the start. But the man who tells the story is well drawn, and the story itself quite exciting enough to hold one's interest. Mr. Fletcher aims lower, emotionally, but is considerably more of a realist in his own world. The House in Tuesday Market (Jenkins. 7s. 6d.) contains a number of quite vigorous character-sketches, and an excellent opening, where a man looks in the oriel window-seat of the house which he has rented, only to find reposing therein a corpse which had perished some ten years before. The detective, like all Mr. Fletcher's detectives, discovers little for himself, but waits for persons to come and supply him with relevant information. This will no doubt be decried by detective fans, though it is fairly obviously true to life; but Mr. Fletcher's public must by now be secure enough to be unaffected by this,

or by the comparatively minor detail that he omits to

provide his mystery with a solution.

Mr. Bailey has abandoned Mr. Fortune, for the moment and in Garston's (Methuen. 7s. 6d.) provides us with a totally new detective. If it were not for the absurdity of the plot. Garston's would be a very good novel, it is well written and exciting, and the detective is a comparatively new idea. It is original, in an English novel, at least, to find a detective who may reasonably be suspected of complicity in the crime which he is nominally investigating. But the solution, when it arrives, is so incredible as to pull the reader up with an unpleasant shock. Mr. Gollomb, having patented the idea of a 'psychological' detective, does it again in The Subtle Trail (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.), and, I am bound to admit, with considerable success. His 'Goldfish' really is a Behaviourist; that is to say, he does cause persons to assume significant attitudes, and from the attitudes reads certain facts about the minds which produced them. Up to a point, this philosophy is interesting; but I should like to see how it would work in a non-American setting, i.e. a setting where stick-ups and other forms of vehemence did not intervene to help the story along. I fear in that event Mr. Gollomb would be dull: as it is. he is fair second-class. Q.E.D. and The Craig Poisoning Mystery (Collins. Crime Club. 7s. 6d. each) show Messrs. Lynn Brock and A. Fielding pursuing their several ways. Mr. Brock's mystery is rendered more mysterious (but not more interesting) by its close connection with other works by the same author. It appears that Colonel Gore, having failed in his last effort to prove his case against a sinister lady who is said to be descended from the Hare of the Burke-and-Hare combination, determined to do it in this one, even at the price of getting hit over the head by

a convenient thug who has no speaking part. (Mr. Brock, like Mr. Macdonald, has been reading *The Gangs of New York*—a useful storehouse of American crooks.) I am glad Colonel Gore succeeded; I fervently hope that the wicked lady is now safely dead; but I am faintly surprised that Messrs. Collins could find no better story to advertise for their Crime Club. Mr. Fielding's style is horrible, and he has an unnatural dislike for verbs. That apart, his story is painstaking, long, and very heavy going: some will probably like it. Miss Annie Haynes's *Crystal Beads Murder (John Lane. 7s. 6d.)* is the most Victorian of works, the innocent girl sells herself to save her brother's honour, and *all* the characters soliloquise. It may be read as a period piece.

Of new hands, the crop is poor. The Owner Lies Dead, by Tylene Perry (Gollancz. 7s. 6d.), is the best of them. It is an American novel of a mining town, with a curious lack of characteristic Americanisms. The plot is rather unnecessarily complicated, but the writing is not at all bad, and one might do worse than spend an hour or so upon it. Murder on the Palisades, by Will Levinrew, which the same publishers sponsor, is violent and silly. The chief character is a lady in a bath-chair, who kills people from the roof of her house with a large catapult, and also infects them with strange diseases. The detective is said to be a rival of Dr. Thorndyke, but, except in having read medical textbooks, he does not resemble him in the least, and he shares the curious habit of other Transatlantic sleuths in not confiding his suspicions to the police until several subsequent murders have confirmed them. Messrs. Methuen appear to have almost used up the impetus which they received from their prize competition; at least, The Low Road, by Hugo Morrison (3s. 6d.) is a foolish

story, redeemed from the ruck by its choice of an impish small boy as detective; and Burden's End, by Bridget Lowry (3s. 6d.), one of the most innocent works upon record. It contains, incidentally, a villain who makes no fewer than seven unsuccessful attempts at murdering the heroine, which must surely create a record for incompetence, particularly as his villainous nature is obvious from his first appearance. Two other very innocent books are The Brown Murder Case, by Ronald Daniel (Shalory. 7s. 6d.), and Murder off Broadway, by Leonard Falkner (Hamilton. 7s. 6d.). One of these is English and one American, but there is little else to distinguish them or to recommend them to any but the insatiable.

Finally comes a good joke. The Big Ben Alibi, by Neil Gordon (John Lane. 7s. 6d.), exploits an idea which must have occurred to many, that of a detective novelist reduced to stimulating his own sales by the staging of a real murder; but it is well done. It is light, of course, and should be read at a sitting if it is to be properly enjoyed; but it is not portentous and the satirical atmosphere is well kept up. This is the best book of Mr. Gordon's that I have read as yet.

Not reviewed: The Beacon Hill Murders, by Scarlett (Heinemann); The Toasted Blonde, by Reeve (Collins); The Golden Ape, by Adams (Methuen); Murder in the Village, by Skinner (Methuen).

The Pandervils, by Gerald Bullett. (Heinemann. 6s. net.) Those eulogies which appear upon the wrappers of later editions of novels, and those cunningly chosen extracts from the raptures of critics, sometimes induce in one presentiments of an excellence which the book almost inevitably disappoints. One then condemns the author

for his lack of such large accomplishment rather than praise him for his approach to the promised magnificence of the extollings. *The Pandervils*, which was first published as two separate novels, is now issued in one volume, its wrapper plentifully garnished with dissertations upon its noble qualities. But I agree with them. It is an enormously pleasing and satisfactory book.

It is almost impossible to give a not-disputable definition of the tradition of the English novel; but, whatever it is, *The Pandervils* is in it. Mr. Bullett has that comprehending sympathy for his characters which also is induced in the reader: that delicious and unobtrusive sense of humour about the ordinary incidents of ordinary living: that feeling for countrysides, and the interactions of

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Two Years, by Liam O'Flaherty. (Cape. 7s. 6d.) 'Even to this day,' says Mr. O'Flaherty in his first chapter, 'I am very enthusiastic about every experience that is new to me.' First, therefore, he tried working in a brewery. 'After five days, the manager called me aside and suggested that I should become more interested in my work.' Half an hour later, 'irritated by what the manager had said', he chanced to smash a valuable instrument. There was a scene. 'I did not return to the brewery on Monday morning.' Instead, he became a hotel porter; he thought he should like that. His business was to clean the rooms and polish the shoes. 'Never having been able to accommodate myself to the performance of senseless drudgery, I surrendered the intention of cleaning the rooms after a feeble effort.' The shoes fared little better. In a few days

there was a 'tumult'; he left the hotel, therefore, and became a clerk. 'My job was to file letters . . . I struggled for five days to set things right, but as I am not very good at keeping things tidy, things were as bad, or almost as bad, as they had been when I came.' After that he went to sea. At Rio it occurred to him to take a trip into the heart of Brazil, where he would 'assume a pose of gentleness', and thus persuade the natives to accept him as their god. Dropping the pose, he would then show himself in his true colours as another Genghiz Khan. 'In that manner I could conquer Brazil.' So he set out, and in some hours reached the suburbs. 'The exercise had done me a great deal of good.' Content with that, he went to sea again—to Smyrna, where he drank continuously for six days, and was taken on board with delirium tremens

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-it was delightful, for he had a fellow-victim, and thev watched each other. His later wanderings were through America and Canada, where he held innumerable jobs. but not for long. The narrative is beautiful: every stroke tells. The theories, on the other hand, are not so good. He had as many theories as jobs, and set more store by them: for this is not, of course, the story of a man of action; any form of action more involved than coal-heaving was, on his own showing, utterly beyond his reach. His views are full of cheerful inconsistency, but lean decidedly towards the Nietzschean—the worship of power. His reaction to events is almost startlingly primitive. When he heard a man being strangled, he lay still and pretended to be asleep. When he saw a girl being raped, he 'turned away'. When he tired of a job, he left immediately. When he was told to hurry, he struck his superior on the head with a tray. It is great fun at first, but grows, perhaps, at last, a little wearing.

On the Trail, by Frank Harris. (The Bodley Head. 7s. 6d.) Unsatisfied, as he admits, with the rewards of literature, Mr. Frank Harris willingly returns in memory to a simpler world—to Texas in the 'seventies. For as a youth he ran away from home and became a cowboy. 'The life was enchanting.' Amateurs of Wild West fiction have not, they find, been very far misled: here they all are, the long days in the saddle, the gun-play, the feats of skill, the escapes from Indians. The book, though far from tedious, has a sedative effect; the world unfolded is so solid, so serene, so innocent of speculation. A bare and vivid realism is the true adornment of a narrative inevitably picturesque; and that adornment is all that has here been



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given to it. There are almost no reflections. It speaks for itself.

Backwater, by T. S. Stribling. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.) Jim Murdock's father was a bootlegger, illiterate but very rich, and a man of principle into the bargain. 'The son had never known him to do anything against his own conscience or against the tenets of the Hardshell Baptist Church.' But socially he was, of course, no class at all. Jim fell in love with a neighbour's daughter; her family was not merely aristocratic, but tenaciously respectable. and though she did not mind Jim's making love to her. she would not marry him for fear the children turned out wrong. After adventures and vicissitudes, the tables turned: Mary Sue's father instigated a bank robbery, while Jim's, at the risk of his life, saved the town from being swept away in a flood. It is a good story, articulate and unaffected; but it ought to end badly. Jim's father, for one thing, ought to have been drowned. Just after the disaster, some one tells the son that the men on the dyke have got some whisky now, and are all working in good heart again. 'Murdock hardly knew what the fellow was saying. His last phrase, "working in good heart again", set up a desolate aching in his breast. His father was always working in good heart, or fighting in good heart, or vituperating in good heart, or giving his goods or his life to others, all in good heart.' In spite, however, of this formal valedictory, the old man seems likely to survive. And Mary Sue is certainly a shady character; her consent, coming when it did, could hardly have relieved the lover's mind. The ethics of the book are occasionally rather puzzling; but the episodes are admirable.



# LIFE AND LETTERS

#### ALDOUS HUXLEY

## MUSIC AT NIGHT

Moonless, this June night is all the more alive with stars. Its darkness is perfumed with faint gusts from the blossoming lime trees, with the smell of wetted earth and the invisible greenness of the vines. There is silence; but a silence that breathes with the soft breathing of the sea and, in the thin shrill noise of a cricket, insistently, incessantly harps on the fact of its own deep perfection. Far away, the passage of a train is like a long caress, moving gently, with an inexorable gentleness, across the warm living body of the night.

Music, you say; it would be a good night for music. But I have music here in a box, shut up, like one of those bottled djinns in the Arabian Nights, and ready at a touch to break out of its prison. I make the necessary mechanical magic and suddenly, by some miraculously appropriate coincidence (for I had selected the record in the dark, without knowing what music the machine would play), suddenly the introduction to the Benedictus in Beethoven's Missa Solemnis begins to trace its patterns on the moonless sky.

The Benedictus. Blessed and blessing, this music is in some sort the equivalent of the night, of the deep and living darkness, into which, now in a single jet, now in a

fine interweaving of melodies, now in pulsing and almost solid clots of harmonious sound, it pours itself, stanchlessly pours itself, like time, like the rising and falling, falling trajectories of a life. It is the equivalent of the night in another mode of being, as an essence is the equivalent of the flowers, from which it is distilled.

There is, at least there sometimes seems to be, a certain blessedness lying at the heart of things, a mysterious blessedness, of whose existence occasional accidents or providences (for me, this night is one of them) makes us obscurely, or it may be intensely, but always fleetingly, alas, always only for a few brief moments aware. In the Benedictus Beethoven gives expression to this awareness of blessedness. His music is the equivalent of this Mediterranean night, or rather of the blessedness at the heart of the night, of the blessedness as it would be if it could be sifted clear of irrelevance and accident, refined and separated out into its quintessential purity.

'Benedictus, benedictus . . .' One after another the voices take up the theme propounded by the orchestra and lovingly meditated through a long and exquisite solo (for the blessedness reveals itself most often to the solitary spirit) by a single violin, 'Benedictus, benedictus. . . .' And then, suddenly, the music dies; the flying djinn has been re-bottled. With a stupid, insect-like insistence, a steel

point rasps and rasps the silence.

At school, when they taught us what was technically known as English, they used to tell us to 'express in our own words' some passage from whatever play of Shakespeare was at the moment being rammed, with all its annotations-particularly the annotations-down our reluctant throats. So there we would sit, a row of inky urchins, laboriously translating 'now silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies' into 'now smart silk clothes lie in the wardrobe', or 'To be or not to be' into 'I wonder whether I ought to commit suicide or not'. When we had finished, we would hand in our papers and the presiding pedagogue would give us marks, more or less, according to the accuracy with which 'our own words' had 'expressed' the meaning of the Bard.

He ought, of course, to have given us naught all round, with a hundred lines to himself for ever having set us the silly exercise. Nobody's 'own words', except those of Shakespeare himself, can possibly 'express' what Shakespeare meant. The substance of a work of art is inseparable from its form; its truth and its beauty are two and yet, mysteriously, one. The verbal expression of even a metaphysic or a system of ethics is very nearly as much of a work of art as a love poem. The philosophy of Plato expressed in the 'own words' of Jowett is not the philosophy of Plato; nor in the 'own words' of, say, Billy Sunday, is the teaching of St. Paul St. Paul's teaching.

'Our own words' are inadequate even to express the meaning of other words; how much more inadequate, when it is a matter of rendering meanings which have their original expression in terms of music or one of the visual arts! What, for example, does music 'say'? You can buy at almost any concert an analytical programme that will tell you exactly. Much too exactly; that is the trouble. Every analyst has his own version. Imagine Pharaoh's dream interpreted successively by Joseph, by the Egyptian soothsayers, by Freud, by Rivers, by Adler, by Jung, by Wohlgemuth: it would 'say' a great many different things. Not nearly so many, however, as the

Fifth Symphony has been made to say in the verbiage of its analysts. Not nearly so many as the Virgin of the . Rocks and the Sistine Madonna have no less lyrically said through pages of post-Paterian prose.

Annoyed by the verbiage and this absurd multiplicity of attributed 'meanings', some critics have protested that music and painting signify nothing but themselves; that the only things they 'say' are things, for example, about modulations and fugues, about colour values and threedimensional forms. That they say anything about human destiny or the universe at large, is a notion which these

purists dismiss as merely nonsensical.

If the purists were right, then we should have to regard painters and musicians as monsters. For it is strictly impossible to be a human being and not to have views of some kind about the universe at large, very difficult to be a human being and not to express those views, at any rate by implication. Now, it is a matter of observation that painters and musicians are not monsters. Therefore . . . The conclusion follows, unescapably.

It is not only in programme music and problem pictures that composers and painters express their views about the universe. The purest and most abstract artistic creations can be, in their own peculiar language, as eloquent in this respect as the most deliberately tendencious.

Compare, for example, a Virgin by Piero della Francesca with a Virgin by Tura. Two Madonnas—and the current symbolical conventions are observed by both artists. The difference, the enormous difference between the two pictures, is a purely pictorial difference, a difference in the forms and their arrangement, in the disposition of the lines and planes and masses. To anyone in the

least sensitive to the eloquence of pure form, the two Madonnas say utterly different things about the world.

Piero's composition is a welding together of smooth and beautifully balanced solidities. Everything in his universe is endowed with a kind of supernatural substantiality, is much more 'there' than any object of the actual world could possibly be. And how sublimely rational, in the noblest, the most humane acceptation of the word, how orderedly philosophical is the landscape, are all the inhabitants of this world! It is the creation of a god who 'ever plays the geometer'.

What does she say, this Madonna from San Sepolcro? If I have not wholly mistranslated the eloquence of Piero's forms, she is telling us of the greatness of the human spirit, of its power to rise above circumstance and dominate fate. If you were to ask her: 'How shall I be saved?' 'By Reason,' she would probably answer. And, anticipating Milton, 'Not only, not mainly upon the Cross,' she would say, 'is Paradise regained, but in those deserts of utter solitude where man puts forth the strength of his reason to resist the fiend'. This particular mother of Christ is probably not a Christian.

Turn now to Tura's picture. It is fashioned out of a substance that is like the living embodiment of flame—flame-flesh, alive and sensitive and suffering. His surfaces writhe away from the eye, as though shrinking, as though in pain. The lines flow intricately with something of that disquieting and, you feel, magical calligraphy, which characterizes certain Tibetan paintings. Look closely; feel your way into the picture, into the painter's thoughts and intuitions and emotions. This man was naked and at the mercy of destiny. To be able to proclaim the spirit's stoical independence, you must be able to raise your head

above the flux of things; this man was sunk in it, overwhelmed. He could introduce no order into his world; it remained for him a mysterious chaos, fantastically marbled with patches, now of purest heaven, now of the most excruciating hell. A beautiful and terrifying world, is this Madonna's verdict; a world like the incarnation, the material projection, of Ophelia's madness. There are no certainties in it but suffering and occasional happiness. And as for salvation, who knows the way of salvation? There may perhaps be miracles, and there is always hope.

The limits of criticism are very quickly reached. When he has said 'in his own words' as much, or rather as little, as 'own words' can say, the critic can only refer his readers to the original work of art: let them go and see for themselves. Those who overstep the limit are either rather stupid, vain people, who love their own words and imagine that they can say in them more than 'own words' are able in the nature of things to express. Or else they are intelligent people who happen to be philosophers or literary artists and who find it convenient to make the criticism of other men's work a jumping-off place for their own creativity.

What is true of painting is equally true of music. Music 'says' things about the world, but in specifically musical terms. Any attempt to reproduce these musical statements 'in our own words' is necessarily doomed to failure. We cannot isolate the truth contained in a piece of music; for it is a beauty-truth and inseparable from its partner. The best we can do is to indicate in the most general terms the nature of the musical beauty-truth under consideration and to refer curious truth-seekers to the original. Thus, the introduction to the *Benedictus* in the *Missa Solemnis* is a statement about the blessedness

that is at the heart of things. But this is about as far as 'own words' will take us. If we were to start describing in our own words exactly what Beethoven felt about this blessedness, how he conceived it, what he thought its nature to be, we should very soon find ourselves writing lyrical nonsense in the style of the analytical programme makers. Only music, and only Beethoven's music, and only this particular music of Beethoven can tell us with any precision what Beethoven's conception of the blessedness at the heart of things actually was. If we want to know, we must listen—on a still June night, by preference, with the breathing of the invisible sea for background to the music and the scent of lime-trees drifting through the darkness, like some exquisite soft harmony apprehended by another sense.

### MICHAEL DUGDALE

## THE ODIOUS DUKE

After the storms that raged over the building of Blenheim, after the insults from the cantankerous Sarah, it was with relief that Sir John Vanbrugh turned his attention to the design of another and more magnificent palace for another and more accommodating duchess. Her Grace of Ollerton had ideas of the proper nature of a nobleman's house that suited the architect's exuberant temperament. Her husband, raised to the Dukedom by William III, on account, largely, of the charm of his personality, and the sparkle of his smile, besides other and equally substantial reasons. had by the same act been possessed of an income proportionately princely. Vanbrugh might plan a palace as riotously as could be. The Duchess would approve, the Duke would pay. Porticoes rose with astounding extravagance, colonnades curved and spread in a series of widening semicircles round the forecourt. A river was diverted with enormous labour to flow through the park, spanned by the bridge that Sarah Marlborough had not allowed him to build. Avenues radiated in every direction, centring on a Corinthian temple of black marble, to astonish a world that had not yet heard of Capability Brown. A dome of vast proportions, frescoed within by Thornhill to look even more richly Palladian than it was, curved over the central hall, and beneath it sat the Duchess of Ollerton, housed at last as became her rank, and happy. Where she of Marlborough had complained of inconvenience at Blenheim, she of Ollerton basked in magnificence at Castle Quere. She cared not that her dinner

grew cold on its journey from the kitchen to the diningroom, a journey involving the transit of two open colonnades, three gun-rooms and, after a series of corridors, her own bedroom; these were trivial considerations fit only for cooks, and the likes of cooks (a remark that she repeated to Sarah, who was inclined to resent it). The Duke, who looked to his wife in matters of taste, supposed that she was right, and that it was indeed impossible to be princely without also being draughty. He knew that his London house was smaller and more comfortable, but if he found himself preferring it, he put the thought aside as unworthy of a nobleman. Not so, or not entirely so, his descendants, who had added here a bathroom, and there a lavatory, and even reconstructed the kitchen court, to the detriment of symmetry but the vast improvement of comfort. The rumbling noise that had been heard in the air during these operations was by some ascribed to the distant mutterings of a storm, by others to the sounds of shiftings and turnings emanating from the far-off sarcophagus of Sir John Vanbrugh. That architect was not one whose sleep could be broken without good cause, but here was desecration to disturb the least sensitive. The kitchen court at Ouere was an important feature of the design, balancing, as it did, the stables on the farther side, and combining with its partner to compose and lull the riot of the centre block. Corinthian shaft and pilaster strained upwards to pediment and statuary group over the state rooms, opposed by the sober lines of Tuscan cornice and unbroken walling on the flank. As a storm lacks its fullest effect without the calm before and after, so the magnificence of Quere was triumphantly enhanced by the steady solidity of its wings. It was this effect, of such importance to the general design, that a comfort-loving

and vandal generation had largely swept away. The balance had gone, sacrificed to hot dinners and the indolence and rarity of latter-day servants. The facts are noted and deplored in a series of articles in *Country Life*, and rightly, in the opinion of the author of these, might Sir John Vanbrugh revolve and spin in his grave.

George Backwards, Eighth Duke of Ollerton, was not the least talented of his line. Having succeeded to the title in the year 1911, at a time when his country was much troubled by politics, he had been unstinting in his services both as hereditary legislator and as Governor of an important Dominion. He now divided his time between Ollerton House in London and Castle Quere, where his Duchess would entertain as lavishly as suited her hospitable nature. There were few of eminence in the country whose names did not appear in the Visitors' Book at Quere, accompanied—more often than not—by some verse or thought that testified to the gaiety and brilliance of the parties, or even a drawing signed in the corner by such names as 'Orpen', 'Dicksee', or 'Spy'.

At Christmas, however, the parties were confined to the Backwards family.

Almost engulfed in what one might easily have taken to be a large ormolu coffin (did one not know it was a writing-table), the Duchess was composing invitations. A little pile of envelopes lay beside her.

'The Countess of Quere.'

'The Lady Graham Backwards.'

'The Lady Cecilia Acrid.'

'Mrs. Patrick Backwards.'

'The Lord Alexander Backwards.'

'Mrs. . . . '

The Duchess's pen hovered uncertain over the last

envelope. She looked up at her husband, who was ab-

sorbed, apparently, in the Field.

'We must, I suppose, ask Leonard and Muriel,' she said; a question which the Duke seemed to find difficulty in answering.

'Muriel spoke of Switzerland,' he hazarded.

'I wish she'd go there,' replied the Duchess, 'it would be so good for her health.'

With a firm hand she addressed the last envelope.

'Mrs. Leonard Backwards.'

In the view of Alan, her youngest son, his cousins Leonard and Muriel were entirely odious, and unlike his mother, to whom active dislike was an unfamiliar emotion, he made little or no effort to find them otherwise. His view was shared in varying degrees by the rest of his family, but by none expressed with such strength. Looking up from his magazine (not, apparently, the *Field*) he commented upon the situation.

'Muriel has spoken of Switzerland every year since she discovered it was grand to go there. But she won't go, until, some happy day, I persuade you not to ask them here.'

'I can't think,' the Duchess helplessly murmured, 'why she likes coming. We live too simply (one would suppose) for them.'

In response to a bell, a footman came in to take her letters.

There were few occasions to which Muriel Backwards looked forward with such dread as her Christmas holiday at Quere. Born to be snubbed and to take it hardly, married to one of the most widely disliked men in London, her life was full of vexation.

She had imagined that by marrying into the backwaters of Debrett, her life would acquire that gaiety and sparkle that she felt would become her so well. She soon was to discover that her backwater was ill-chosen, and sourly she watched the main stream pass her by during fifty-one weeks of the year. Regularly, however, at Christmas they were invited to spend, at Quere, a week of such mortification that all the grandeur and consequence that it entailed was poor return. But to refuse the ducal invitation was to abandon the hope which she still entertained, though with decreasing conviction, of one day moving at ease in the circles of the great. Yearly she spoke of Switzerland, but yearly she went to Quere.

Leonard Backwards was the Duke of Ollerton's nephew. His father, the late Lord Francis Backwards, had disgraced the family tradition in a way, the only way, that could never be forgiven. He had become a crank. To teetotalism and the smoking of herbal cigarettes he had added the eccentricity of sending his son to a co-educational school, where he had picked up a hundred and one disagreeable peculiarities, of which not the least irritating was an overwhelming self-pity, that in time produced its own justification.

'Mary Ollerton asks us to Quere.' Muriel announced.

'Last year, in the Walpole dressing-room,' disconsolately recalled her husband, 'I would have hesitated to submit a pat of butter to such cold.'

'You could have asked for a fire.'

'I could, and did. It smoked, until I was little better than a haddock.'

'Shall I tell Aunt Mary that we shan't be coming?'

'And have Alan flattering himself that he's got rid of us at last? No, I shall visit my family home as usual.'

As though the headless fragment from Olympia, the dizzy Bacchus from Herculaneum, or Canova's Diana

in the marble hall were not statuary enough, the Duke's grandchildren were ruffling the purity of the snow in front of the house by constructing a snow-man. In disregard of the warnings of nurses, who watched with anxious eyes from the nursery wing, in respect of wettings and snow inside the boots, the prodigious image grew more and more monumental until Vanbrugh himself could have nothing to complain of in matter of size. Alan Backwards watched the proceedings with amusement, but without envy, from the library window. No weather, he reflected, to be out of doors. The snow was thick, and the approach, which curled into the distance and disappeared round the frozen lake, where certain older members of his family were lugubriously skating, was a sheet of ice.

Suddenly the frosted snow Christmas card at which he gazed became for a moment less Dickens, advanced suddenly a hundred years into the twentieth century. Skating and slithering dangerously, despite chains, a car was grinding up the hill. A slight skid for a moment roused a hope, soon to be dashed. Alan left the library and sought the hall, where his mother sat, engrossed in the manufacture of a cylinder of knitted wool.

'They've arrived,' he announced, without enthusiasm.

Accustomed to social situations less pleasant even than this, the Duchess of Ollerton prepared a face to greet Leonard and Muriel as became a hostess and an aunt. Her daughter, Lady Cecilia Acrid, contrived also to conceal her feelings in a way unusual to her, so that even Leonard could not positively say he had been insulted on the doorstep. Alan, however, shirked the issue by concealing himself in the library. It was not until the entrance of the children, wearied with sculpture, that the unhappy pair became completely conscious of their unpopularity. If

the absolute refusal of Cyril Acrid to say how-do-you-do to his Cousin Muriel was unfortunate, still more so were the comments of his brother David, who thought proper to report in *oratio obliqua* an unrestrained criticism made injudiciously in his presence the night before by his Uncle Alan. When finally the rest of the family returned to lunch, they found an awkward and embarrassed group waiting for them.

The Backwards family, gathered en masse, was, to anyone not in their immediate circle, a little formidable.

Though each one severally (with the possible exception of Alan) could assume a social manner to disarm the shyest, united they were a spectacle to strike terror to the heart of the boldest visitor. The Duchess was fully conscious of the reputation of her family among the county; but in vain she would ask her neighbours to lunch, tea and dinner, only to find that her children and nephews would fade mysteriously from sight, not reappearing until the last car had vanished down the avenue. If such were their tactics in the face of the alien enemy, it would go scarcely less hard with the enemy within their gates, and the family, though at variance upon most points of opinion, joined in this, that they disliked Leonard and Muriel. They had, however, different ways of showing it.

Alan was frankly rude. The Duke's nephew, Patrick, and his wife Zana, a flighty millionairess from New York, did their best to be civil for a day, until Muriel suggested that she and Zana should give a joint ball for their debutante daughters. Zana turned a little pale, and abandoned any show of civility. Patrick's father, Lord Alexander Backwards, discovered early on in the visit that Leonard could not discuss wine intelligently, and so, baffled on his only topic, made no further social effort.

Lord and Lady Quere conducted themselves as best they could, but a natural antipathy soon got the better of them. Cecilia, possibly, behaved the best. None too fortunate in her own marriage, she was used to unpleasant people and to the smoothing down of quarrels. She and Muriel would go for long walks through frozen and uninviting lanes, in the hope of diverting Muriel's thoughts for a time at least from the chilly behaviour of the family, by substituting therefor an even greater chilliness of fingers and toes.

So far the situation, though painful, was not unusual. Twenty years previously it had been much the same. In those days Leonard's hair had been pulled, he had been thrown down muddy banks, and left out of games. Now his wife was snubbed and he was ignored. The behaviour of the family, then as now, was perhaps not pretty, but it had not altered; and it is not for this that I single out this particular party to record. Other and more eventful occurrences mark the year and mark more especially the 31st of December. On the morning of that day the male members of the house of Backwards, having finished their breakfast and performed those ritual observances which are essential to the order and stability of the great country houses, were preparing to shoot. Leather bags were filled with cartridges. Guns were loaded into motor-cars. Keepers, holding respectfully a little apart by the front door, were duly gratified by smile and word. Retrievers were scratched, tickled and otherwise annoyed, as the six men climbed into the car, leaving their retainers to follow as best they might in a covered lorry where dogs and the corpses of bird or rabbit could be conveyed without harm or mess.

The Duke of Ollerton sat in front. Lord Quere and his

brother Graham and his uncle Alexander sat behind, while Alan and Patrick affected a comfort that they did not feel, each on one of those small collapsible seats that grew like mushrooms out of the floor of the car.

'It was, I suppose, Cecilia's doing?' remarked Patrick.

'It was mine,'Alan contradicted him, not without pride.

'Anyway,' commented the eldest brother, 'they're away, whoever got rid of them.'

'Cecilia persuaded Muriel,' said Patrick, returning to

his original theme.

'Maybe,' said Alan; 'but they wouldn't have left a ducal house for a Swiss hotel if it hadn't been for me.'

'Explain yourself.'

'Because,' murmured Alan, as though to dismiss a boring subject, 'I was so disagreeable all the time.'

'Well, they're gone.'

'They're gone.'

They had. Switzerland, so often talked of, had at length prevailed. Quere, vowed Leonard, as unregretted he drove from the Hall door, might get through next Christmas as it could without them. Alan should see that there was a limit to rudeness. . . .

Meanwhile the Duke of Ollerton's largest and oldest car was approaching its destination. The country through which they had to pass was precipitous and the roads were bad. The discomfort of the smaller seats was becoming acute. Alan, as much to ease his jolted spine as to see how soon their journey was to end, rose to lean out of the window. They were passing along the upper edge of a steep ravine. Some way below, the river fell frothing from ledge to ledge. Here and there a notice warned the trespasser of the penalty attaching to the crime of fishing in ducal waters. Beyond, the road crossed the river

by a bridge, where more notices reminded any traveller, whose weight might exceed three tons, of the dangers of passage. Alan drew in his head.

'If something isn't done soon about that bridge,' he said, 'there'll be an accident. I'm told it sways and bends

if you venture on it with a bicycle.'

'How fortunate,' replied Graham, 'that we are not

upon bicycles.'

Unrepaired through the rains and winds of years, crazy when young and now in its age decrepit, but bearing bravely its appointed weight that should not exceed three tons, the old bridge had bided its time. Not for it to perish in the lowly company of farm cart or flock of sheep. Inglorious though it had lived, the bridge was not to die unnoticed.

There are some that say that as the car, rumbling and complaining along the rough and pitted road, approached the bridge, a figure dressed in the gay costume of the reign of Queen Anne, the transparency and vagueness of whose form indicated clearly enough that it was no inhabitant of this world, stepped into the rickety structure. In its hand it held a parchment on which the keen-sighted might descry a plan of Castle Quere. Had the spectator been conversant with the kitchen arrangements of the Castle he would have observed that those on the plan were devised more spaciously, more symmetrically, but with less convenience. The figure is said to have halted upon the bridge, and impeded a moment the progress of the car. Then laughing in a hollow and dismal manner, it pitched the plan into the river far below, and faded, as it did so, from sight. At the same moment, and before the fluttering parchment had been engulfed in the boiling waters, with a sound of rending terrible to hear, the

bridge, the car and its occupants fell headlong into the flood.

How this legend gained currency it is difficult to say. since it is certain that there were no surviving eyewitnesses of the accident, but it is so essentially convincing that I have allowed myself to record it here. Whether it was the spectre of Sir John Vanbrugh, enraged at the alteration of his grandest design, that, by stopping the car upon the bridge, precipitated the accident, or whether it is to be ascribed to some mundane cause I know not. No doubt, however, can be cast upon the essentials of the story. When the rescuers finally arrived upon the scene of the disaster no spark of life remained in any of the victims. The head keeper, a man of great intelligence, affirmed that he heard the Duke groan when they reached the bed of the river. But in this case his loyalty to the family, coupled with presence of mind and knowledge of the intricacies of death duties, prompted him to utter a falsehood. In point of fact the Duke, seated as he was beside the chauffeur, died first.

Early in December of the following year Leonard Backwards, Ninth Duke of Ollerton, glanced upwards from the perusal of the *Field* to where his Duchess sat, almost engulfed in what one might easily have taken for a large ormolu coffin (did one not know that it was a writing-table), composing invitations. A little pile of envelopes lay beside her.

'Her Grace the Dowager Duchess of Ollerton.'

'The Countess of Quere.'

'The Lady Graham Backwards.'

'The Lady Cecilia Acrid.'

'Mrs. Patrick Backwards.'

She finished her writing and rang for a footman to take away her letters.

'They won't come,' she said.

'They'll come.' The Duke's voice contained certainty.

They came. Nearly a year previously this point had been decided. Soon after the funerals the widows of the house of Backwards had met at dinner with the Dowager Duchess.

'After all,' Lady Quere had decided, 'it is not for us to be stand-offish. We have always been on the best of terms with them, and mother asked them regularly to Quere. When Muriel invites me I shall certainly accept.'

The old Duchess said nothing. She was thinking of the clarkias in the terraced garden, and her certainty that Muriel would remove them.

'Cyril and I have decided to go as soon as will be decent,' said Lady Cecilia.

'I think,' said Zana, 'I shall suggest a ball for Lucy and my Anne; Muriel was speaking of it last year. Later on, of course,' she added hurriedly.

Thus had the family settled to forgive and forget. It was some time, however, before they were given an opportunity to put their intentions into practice.

For nearly a year Muriel invited none of them except, once, the old Duchess. The year grew old. Once again Christmas drew near, and for the first time since the happenings recorded, the Duchess was asking her family to stay with her.

They arrived. Snow again lay on the ground. Cecilia's boys and Graham's two little girls were once again absorbed in the construction of a snow-man, unrestrained by melancholy recollections. The elder members of the house-party, however, could not but feel that the gathering had not the cheerfulness appropriate to the

season. Conversation at dinner seemed to lack flow. Leonard, as he sat at the end of his own table, and surveyed his guests, all ladies, except for Cyril Acrid, who sulked next to Muriel, was darkly conscious of resentment against these women who had for years treated him with every degree of veiled rudeness, and who now were enjoying, or affecting to enjoy, his hospitality. He was silent, and his silence lent an awkwardness to the meal.

During dessert, however, he pulled himself a little together, and cleared his throat with an alarming suddenness. He appeared, to Zana's horrified eyes, to be about to make a speech.

'Ahem! ...'

It was evident that he was going to say the one thing it was essential should not be said. On no account, Lady Graham Backwards had insisted to Cecilia the night before, on no account was a thing to be made of this party. Leonard only too clearly was about to make a thing of it. The Dowager Duchess, seated on his right, was valiant. She eyed the gold plate off which they were eating.

'Hownice,' shemurmured, 'to have the gold set out for us.'

'And why not "for us"?'

It almost looked as if Leonard was enjoying the situation, was determined to bring it about. The Duchess tried a different line.

'I was afraid,' she ventured, 'that Muriel might wish to re-hang the Rembrandts. I remember her saying she would like them in here.'

'No; we have not altered them. Everything is the same—as last year.'

Leonard was undoubtedly enjoying himself. Again he cleared his throat, and looked round the table, as though to command silence. Through a cloud of strange winter

flowers his wife looked at him with expectant approval. 'Ahem!'

Deliberately, though not without skill, Zana Backwards allowed her glass to slide off the table. Amid a wiping-up of port wine, a collecting of fragments and a profusion of apology Leonard was stopped, and triviality triumphed.

'How they hated their dinner!' said Leonard later.

'How they hated it!' said the Duchess of Ollerton.

The week wore on, and the new year approached. The next day was the 31st of December. How that anniversary was to be passed was a problem in front of them all. Dinner on the night of the thirtieth was as painful a meal as that on the first night that they had assembled. Leonard was taking no risks. This time he did not clear his throat.

'To-morrow—,' he trumpeted, without warning. There was no escape. The widows composed their faces. They had learnt, most of them (by now) how not to blush.

'To-morrow is the anniversary,' the widows heaved each a sigh, 'the anniversary of my succession to the Dukedom of Ollerton.'

He looked round the room. The widows gave each a gasp. Muriel's face wore a beautifully expectant smile. No longer trumpeting, but almost chatty, the Duke continued.

'Among the papers kept at Quere I found some months ago a design by Vanbrugh of a charming little bridge. It is conceived in the Classic taste. I have had it erected on the estate, not, I admit, in its original form. It would have been too expensive. Death duties, you know——'

'It's a shame,' murmured Muriel, never relaxing a moment her smile.

'I have taken the liberty, which I hope Vanbrugh would not have resented, of modifying the design a little.

Not far from here there is, as you know, a picturesque gorge, crossed, once, by a crazy bridge, which collapsed about a year ago.'

'It was rotten, anyway,' put in Muriel.

'I have conceived the idea of replacing it by Vanbrugh's more noble conception, and of making it some sort of monument to commemorate the accident that has placed the house and lands of Quere in my hands. To-morrow we will drive together for the first time over that bridge. There will be a little ceremony—nothing grand—but I hope appropriate—'

Next morning Leonard and Muriel stood together in the library window watching the outraged ladies drive away, their cars slithering and slipping in spite of chains, round the corner of the lake.

'And now,' he said as the last disappeared, 'to open the bridge. It's a pity they're missing it, but they will see it to-morrow in the newspapers.'

'Poor Aunt Mary,' Muriel giggled, 'remind me to tell Craven to move those revolting clarkias next year.'

'And hang the Rembrandts in the big dining-room?'

'An excellent idea.'

Meantime the last preparations were being made at the gorge. The crazy bridge that had collapsed in so memorable a manner had now been replaced by an elegant stone structure. Vanbrugh's drawing had been followed only in general outline, for that ingenious architect had conceived a design altogether too grandiose for a narrower twentieth-century purse. Where he had put a statuary group representing the Royal Anne in the character of Fantasy triumphing over the twin demons of Poverty and Care, Leonard had substituted a marble

bust of himself. The massive and decorated mouldings of cornice and pediment had been, for economy's sake, modified into something simpler. The conception was nevertheless the same; at either end a small pavilion surmounted by a shallow dome, set amid four curved pediments, facing and symbolizing the four winds of heaven. A simple colonnade covered the whole length of the bridge, that swept in a noble curve from side to side of the gorge. Over the entrance of the pavilion nearest the Castle stood the marble bust. The appearance of the whole, viewed from a distance, was elegant. But as the observer approached it appeared perhaps a little mean in detail, perhaps even a little shoddy. Leonard had economized too much.

The last preparations were being made. The marble bust, set upon an elaborate and richly-moulded plinth, was being draped in a flag that Leonard was to sweep off, in front of such villagers as might be persuaded to appear, and the host of reporters and press photographers that had been summoned for the ceremony. Of these latter Leonard was certain, of the former less so, since there was that about the whole performance that failed to commend itself to the countryside, something of a triumph, something a little too Neronic altogether. Finally the workmen were done. The last plank, the last piece of scaffolding had been removed. The bust had been in place barely half an hour. To-morrow, the foreman promised himself, they should return to secure it a little more firmly. The job had been hurried, and hardly, he felt, did him credit. However, the Duke and Duchess would be now on their way. Already a small crowd was gathering. Photographers were waiting. The Vicar, a little reluctantly, had arrived, and a few of his flock.

Gliding smoothly along the road, now mended and patched to a fair surface, came the ducal car. Their Graces descended, wearing smiles that twenty cameras hastened to record. A brief ceremony followed. It is unnecessary to report what Leonard said. He began gracefully enough. A fitting memorial . . . unforeseen chance on this day a year ago . . . Vanbrugh's design . . . alas, death duties . . . House and lands of Quere. . . .

Leonard finished his speech, pausing a little until the busy fingers of shorthand reporters should have done, and jerked the tassel behind him. Something had stuck. Above his head the bust remained shrouded. He jerked harder. Something had given way. The bust. . . .

Crushed and smashed beneath the descending weight of his own arrogant likeness lay Leonard Backwards, Ninth Duke of Ollerton. The busy fingers of shorthand

reporters were once again at work.

And there are some that say that as the late Duke was extolling the happy chance that had made him master of Quere, a figure, dressed in the gay costume of Queen Anne, the transparency and vagueness of whose form indicated clearly enough that it was no inhabitant of this world, stepped into the elegant structure. In its hand it held a parchment, on which the observant might trace the design of that very bridge. But it was noticed that the drawing that he held was more nobly, more richly devised, and of a grandeur of conception far greater than that of the existing bridge. Above the whirrings of the cameras, above the rather whining voice of the Duke himself, there were some that had heard the hollow and threatening laugh which the spectre had uttered as it gazed at the still-shrouded bust, and had faded imperceptibly from view.



W. J. LAWRENCE

# THE DUMB SHOW HAMLET

It is difficult to reconcile the maturer Shakespeare's universally conceded mastery of stagecraft with the gross blunder in tactics made by heralding The Murder of Gonzago with a forestalling dumb show. To say that it is superfluous is not to say all, for its realistic advancement of the scheme of the play is excellently calculated to defeat the primary purpose by putting the bloat king on his guard against the trap which has been laid for him. Nor will it suffice to plead that, grave blemish as it is, it must be pardoned on the score of conventionality. Though there was precedent for the device, there was none for its particular usage. To ponder over these valid objections is to have one's curiosity aroused concerning the wherefore of its origin, a fascinating problem which nobody has ever attempted to solve. Nevertheless, there is little room to doubt that in its abnormality lies its secret. The ensuing investigation of the crux is designed to show the high probability that lost stage history remains embedded in the mystery, that the offending dumb-show, inoffensive and necessary at the period of its origin, owed the stupid prolongation of its existence after the purpose which created it had been served to the arbitrary and time-serving attitude of Shakespeare's fellows.

Unexampled as is the dumb show in some respects, it is not by dint of its initiatory office that it possesses any particular distinctiveness. About half a dozen instances are known in the popular drama of Shakespeare's day (one, at least-in Locrine-preceding Hamlet) in which pantomimic action opened the play. But in all these cases the dumb show was of a different nature to the dumb show in The Murder of Gonzago and followed a different routine. Some are obscurely symbolic, as in Locrine; some are simply introductory, as in The Four Prentices of London; and some convey the antecedents of the plot, as in The Divil's Charter. Generally speaking, dumb shows were of an emblematic order, prefiguring somewhat vaguely the nature of the action which was to follow. pictorial charades, as John Addington Symonds once neatly styled them, 'inexplicable' in the ill-comprehended Shakespearean sense, inasmuch as their meaning was not to be grasped without the aid of an interpreter. Hence, we find that in all these preluding examples, save in the noteworthy exception in Hamlet, either the prologue introduced and expounded the dumb show, as in The Weakest Goes to the Wall and The Whore of Babylon, or the task of exposition, as in The Four Prentices of London, fell to a special presenter. The fact is not without significance that Shakespeare for the most part followed common routine in the rustic interlude in A Midsummer Night's Dream, indulging, however, in some exaggeration for burlesque purposes, especially in making the presenter describe the characters in the dumb show as if they were so many waxwork figures.

What we require, then, first to grasp is that, *Hamlet* apart, such a thing as an unexpounded initiatory dumb show is unknown in Elizabethan drama. That lack is surely a sign-post pointing to the rugged road leading to a solution. Next, we have to ask ourselves why Shakespeare's Prologue (having nothing in particular to say

and saying it in the briefest manner possible) should have delayed coming on until the dumb show had departed, instead of appearing at the very beginning. Also, why Hamlet (in the received text of to-day as based on the second quarto), though familiar with the play, should fancy the Prologue is going to interpret the dumb show when he is going to do nothing of the kind. No purpose is served in prevaricating with Ophelia or deceiving the real audience.

The truth is that all the evidence, as we have it, favours the supposition—never yet, I think, advanced by anyone—that Shakespeare was in nowise responsible for the dumb show. Lewis Theobald gave it as his opinion that the description of the show should be altered so as to make it in keeping with the by-play, i.e. by converting the King and Queen into a Duke and Duchess with regal coronets. Here he drew attention to a curious incongruity, of itself significant enough to all who are capable of reading between the lines. It is surely obvious that, if the dumb show and the play had been devised and written by the one hand at the one time, the principals in both would have been made to tally. Accordingly, we are forced to conclude that Shakespeare wrote The Murder of Gonzago for performance without any dumb show, and is not to be held responsible for its subsequent disfigurement.

In all probability, the circumstances were much as follows. In 1594, the Lord Chamberlain's men purchased the crude, well-worn old Hamlet play, and then, or later, placed it in Shakespeare's hands for revision. The story of the stage treatment of the old Danish saga in the latter half of the sixteenth century proves to be the exact reverse of the transmutation undergone by Sir John Cutler's famous stockings, which, it will be recalled, though

originally silk, had been so frequently darned that they eventually became worsted. What is remarkable, after making all due allowance for Shakespeare's overwhelming genius, is that all trace of the author of the *Ur-Hamlet*, should have disappeared. Meres's silence on the point in 1598 admits of the inference that Shakespeare had not yet been recognized as the author of a Hamlet play.

Though the truth about the matter has been hitherto obscured, there is good reason to believe that in the primary treatment of the theme, the dumb show, precisely in the form in which it has come down to us, constituted the whole of the by-play, or, in other words, that the crisis was reached before the play proper began. (Once established, this would negative the supposition that the concoctor of the spurious quarto drew partly on the Ur-Hamlet and partly on Shakespeare for the text of the by-play.) Only in this way can one account for the unprecedented presentation of the argument in the dumb show: unprecedented, that is, in any play where the dumb show was a mere preliminary. Thoroughly to catch the conscience of the King, the guilty lovers were made of regal rank, and the circumstances compelled the two (for identification purposes) to wear their crowns even in the privacy of their orchard. The King actually lies down on a flowery bank and goes to sleep in his. It may be safely assumed that a brief prologue preceded the dumb show, and that a presenter came on afterwards to put the action of the pantomime into words. So tellingly was this done, that the remorse-bitten Claudius, unable to face a third and fuller exposition of his crime, fled incontinently before the play began.

It may be that the effect came tardily off, or it may be that there was a desire to give the scene some fillip of novelty, but, whatever the reason, Shakespeare apparently wrote the play on the prescribed lines, about a duke and duchess, ignoring the old dumb show, which had then become superfluous. So far all is pretty plain sailing, but the rest is difficult. Since, however, a theory has to be propounded, might it not have been that, when the revision was put in rehearsal, the routine-ridden players, fearing that the groundlings would protest vigorously against the excision of the accustomed dumb show, insisted, in despite of Shakespeare's remonstrances, upon its preservation. (It has always been the same story. Modern new plays have been ruined, time and again, in the same senseless way.) To square the by-play with the old dumb show, the speech headings specifying the Duke and Duchess were altered in the prompt book to the King and Queen, though the text itself still referred to the ducal rank of the two.

It would be idle to attempt to argue away the persistence of the original dumb show. True enough, certain passages omitted in the old plays were often marked linearly in the margin of the prompt book for omission, without cancellation, with the result that when the book was sent to the printer, the omitted passages often found their way into print. But this cannot have happened in this particular case. Not only has the dumb show (with slight variance in the wording but none in the details) a place in the First and Second Quartos and the Folio, but it must be borne in mind that the spurious Quarto was printed from the pirated prompt book of a country company, a book not likely to contain anything superfluous. We may take it that, yielding reluctantly to the arbitrary eleventh-hour decision of his fellows, Shakespeare wrote in a few connecting-links between the dumb show and

the play, an unfortunate interpolation which had the defect of assigning the prologue (correctly placed before) to an improper position. This blemish, ugly as it appears now, did not, however, signify very materially: the main misfortune of the added colloquy between Hamlet and Ophelia was that it aroused expectations which were not to be gratified: a result so risky that further tinkering with the text at this juncture became necessary. In this connection, it must be borne in mind that in the received Hamlet text of to-day, the play scene is printed almost wholly from the Second Quarto, a version of the play made in 1600, and that in the Folio the dialogue, coming immediately after the dumb show, runs somewhat differently, and has a different significance. No one can say for certain when the Folio version was made, but it is assuredly a later text and belongs to the Jacobean period. In the Second Quarto, but not in the Folio, it is to be noted that the Prologue makes his entry just as Ophelia says: 'Belike this show imports the argument of the play'. To that impression Hamlet accedes, though, being conversant with the play, he ought surely to have known better; his reply puts the audience on a wrong scent through conveying the idea that the fellow who has just come on is a presenter. (The Hamlet of the spurious First Quarto is even more deceiving, for, in response to Ophelia's 'What means this, my lord?', he actually says: 'You shall hear anone; this fellow will tell all'.) But in the Folio this fault is amended. There, in response to Ophelia's surmise, Hamlet says: 'we shall know by these Fellowes: the Players cannot keepe counsell, they'l tell all', evidently meaning: 'Have patience: the play will answer the question'. Moreover, it is not until after Ophelia has persisted with: 'Will they tell us what this show meant?',

and Hamlet has made smutty reply that the Prologue enters.

When the text had reached this stage, it would have been an easy matter to remove all the blemishes from the scene by eliminating all the action and dialogue from Hamlet's speech ending with 'the hobby horse is forgot' until the entrance of the Prologue. This was eventually done, and, once done, done for good; but it is a nice question when the players made atonement for the aspersion that Shakespeare's fellows had (unwittingly) cast upon his judgement. A little sensible surmise on the point is, perhaps, allowable. We know that at the Restoration a monopoly of certain of Shakespeare's plays was given to Davenant's company, among them Hamlet, notable as the first of his plays to be acted with scenery. In 1676, a quarto of the tragedy giving an independent text was printed, bearing the equivocal intimation 'as it is now Acted at his Highness the Duke of York's Theatre'. Wherein the equivocation lay is demonstrated in the following extract from the 'Address to the Reader':

This Play being too long to be conveniently Acted, such Places as might be the least prejudicial to the Plot or Sense, are left out upon the Stage; but that we may no way wrong the incomparable Author are here inserted according to the Original Copy with this Mark,"

Almost a fifth of the text was so marked, and, among the omissions, one finds the dumb show. If the play was too long to be conveniently acted on the Restoration stage, it was equally too long to be acted without cuts on the old platform stage. There was practically as much time at the disposal of the players in 1676 as in 1600, for the type of scenery introduced by Davenant, consisting as it

did of mere flats and wings, admitted of its being shifted with celerity. We have good reason, therefore, to believe that a considerable number of the cuts indicated in the Restoration quarto followed pre-Restoration practice, and it may be that by Caroline days, if not earlier, the dumb show had received its quietus. We know from the Roscius Anglicanus of old Downes the prompter that Davenant taught Betterton to play Hamlet after the manner of Taylor, a testimony to Davenant's early familiarity with the acting version of the play. And, for aught we know to the contrary, the Caroline prompt book may have survived.

Scholarship may be confidently challenged to propound an alternative theory accounting for the existence of the offending dumb show. Possibly that may be attempted: never was there a time when so much ingenuity in Elizabethan investigation abounded. But there is one thing, with all its resources, scholarship cannot do. It is impotent wholly to redeem Shakespeare's reputation from the stigma unjustifiably put upon it. The interloping dumb show must, perforce, remain embedded in the text until the crack o' doom.

### JANKO LAVRIN

# AN APOLOGIST OF DILETTANTISM

(On Anatole France)

T

A great deal of Anatole France's renown was due to the fact that, in spite of his rare culture, he was one of the most accessible and comfortable writers. He combined the curiosity of a universal dilettante with the irony of a highbrow who yet condescends to everybody's company with an urbanity which is 'too well-bred to affect the appearance of it'. Having at his disposal a wide range of observations, themes and ideas, he treated all of them with the tact of a brilliant causeur who knows where to stop in order to remain gracefully amusing, preserving at the same time the tone of a free modern mind. His readers could thus enjoy the illusion of being in contact with what is 'up to date' without much, or without any strain on their part. For Anatole France was the last author to disturb them with aspects and problems demanding much effort. This does not mean that he avoided such problems. On the contrary, his books are full of them; only their disturbing quality is tempered and dissolved by his wit, his cheerful irony, and by that truly French intelligence on account of which alone he deserved to be proclaimed (by Jules Lemaître) 'l'extrême fleur du génie latin'.

An attempt to define this 'génie latin' is a hopeless undertaking. In a German, for example, one may find

more thoroughness, more 'solidity' than in a Frenchman. With all that one cannot help feeling that with Germans the intellect as such prevails over the intelligence, while with the French the reverse seems to be the case. If a Frenchman understands more than he knows or cares to know, a German only too often knows much more than he is able to understand. The French genius tends to simplify the most complicated things—even at the risk of being lucid at the expense of profundity. The genius of the Germans, on the other hand, is more attracted by what is 'profound' and irrational. Hence its propensity to complicate even simple problems, to approach life itself through involved theories of life, or else to be somewhat estranged from it by too much learning and knowledge. This cult of quantitative knowledge (which found one of its expressions in an exaggerated esteem for learned titles and diplomas), coupled with an indomitable 'will to culture', made the pre-war Germans the most erudite. the most encyclopædic nation in the world. So it was only natural that many of them should identify culture itself with learning—forgetting that the former is, above all, a matter of quality and not of quantity; a matter of 'blood', of various subconscious elements and tendencies stored up in the entire racial collective.

A Frenchman may take things of culture less seriously than a German. Yet the very fact that individually he belongs to a more settled racial culture on which he can draw even without being aware of it, makes his intelligent 'superficiality' more stimulating, more suggestive, and even more acute than the somewhat heavy intellectual earnestness of the Germans. The vivacious causeur is as typical of the first as the professorial raisonneur is of the second. The German culture, with all its tremendous

possibilities, is still too much in a state of quest and fermentation. That of France, on the other hand, seems to have already worked out too definite a shape and style. Herein lies its advantage, as well as its danger: the danger of an exaggerated 'academic' traditionalism. For the more perfect the heritage of the past the more one is inclined to submit to its charm and authority. Instead of seeking one prefers to conform, to define, to admire, to play and display-until form begins to matter more than substance, and the spirit of life itself becomes somewhat ousted by the elegant esprit. One may none the less be well aware of various 'ultimate problems'; only instead of stopping and uselessly worrying over them, one prefers to skip past them with that serene and polished scepticism which reached its climax in the art of Anatole France.

### II

The astounding variety of Anatole France's work is more or less unified by two factors. One is his style, and the other—his approach to life. With regard to the former one can repeat what he himself has said of Maupassant's style (in La vie littéraire, I), namely that he possesses 'three great virtues of a French author: first of all, clarity, then clarity once more, and finally, clarity'. In whatever he wrote he remained a Parnassian to the end: disciplined, artfully simple and sufficiently detached to allow himself the luxury of perfect ease even amidst the most contradictory ideas and aspects of life. What is known as France's scepticism is in essence only a different name for that detachment of his which he regarded as an inevitable condition for inner freedom.

Being the reverse of a doctrinaire by his very nature. he accepted the relativity of things and ideas simply because this was—in his opinion—the only honest attitude on the part of a free mind. It is enough to peruse his  $L_{\ell}$ jardin d'Epicure in order to realize his aversion not only to the tyranny of errors, but also to that of imposed or self-imposed 'truths'. The cocksure apostles of such truths always struck him either as devoid of inner honesty, or else as minds of an inferior order: narrow, self-deceived and stupidly conceited. Such characters as the moral fanatic Paphnutius (Thais), or the equally narrow revolutionary fanatic Evariste Gameline (Les dieux ont soif), attracted his artistic imagination precisely by being his own opposites. For he himself considered dogmatic convictions as dangerous to one's inner liberty as ignorance. It was for this reason, too, that he remained a sceptic and preferred opinions to convictions, particularly to convictions of the mentioned kind. So he was able to contemplate even the greatest contrasts of thought or life with a benevolent tolerance. One could easily apply to him the words of one of his own characters (Gallio, in Sur la pierre blanche): 'Were I not conciliatory with regard to my own ideas, were I to confer upon a single system an exclusive preference, I could no longer tolerate the freedom of every opinion; having destroyed my own freedom of thought, I could not readily tolerate it in the case of others, and I should forfeit the respect due to every doctrine established and professed by a sincere man. The gods forbid that I should wish my opinion to prevail to the exclusion of any other, and exercise an absolute sway on other minds.'

An artist with such an attitude has little in common with self-tormented seekers, or with the impetuous fighters

for 'ideals'. He is more likely to become an eclectic by his taste, and a hedonist by his motives. In Anatole France these two features were not only interdependent they were a logical outcome of his very scepticism. For he was a sceptic not for the sake of negation, but in order to tolerate, to accept and to enjoy. Instead of worrying over the insoluble problems, he took humanity and life for what they were worth and tried to make the best of them, that is, to extract from everything the widest range of pleasure: pleasure gratifying his intellect, his æsthetic instinct, as well as his senses. His curiosity of a polyhistorian, his broadness of interest thus only increased and intensified the area of his own Epicurean delight. Taking his stand not so much above as outside the truth and error, he became a candid sophist and glided even upon the most dangerous themes, doctrines and ideas with the ease of a perfect skater—always carefully avoiding the holes in the ice. And as if afraid of the pessimism which usually lurks behind a sceptical attitude towards life, he found a weapon against it in his own irony. Gay irony, understanding, kindliness and a certain contempt were so intermixed in his nature that often it would be impossible to separate one from the other. What can be more delightfully ironical than the paradoxes he voiced through his own mouthpieces—the amiable sophists, Nicias, Abbé Coignard, Bergeret? And even when his contempt for man took the upper hand, his taste still prevented him from exchanging his Attic salt for the common pepper of the more aggressive (and for this very reason less stinging) Bernard Shaw. His laughter remained human, because while laughing at humanity he was always ready to laugh at himself too.

#### III

As an eclectic by God's grace, Anatole France indulged alternately in all the inclinations of his manifold personality. Being too much of a passive 'æsthete' to take anvthing very seriously, he remained an amused spectator who let things, fancies, impressions and ideas come to him in profusion. And he took them in profusion. Hence the variety of his works from Jocaste et le chat maigre to L'île des Pingouins; from Thaïs to La rôtisserie de la reine Pédauque, from Pierre Nozière to his series of novels under the general title L'histoire contemporaine. He was particularly attracted by such paradoxical themes as demanded a fine psychological and dialectic tact, combined with an ironic display of intelligence. What can be more paradoxical than his Thais, more ironically playful than L'île des Pingouins or La révolte des anges? As a hedonist or even a frank voluptuary of mind and senses he was much in love with the sophisticated, gay and voluptuous eighteenth century. Even his interest in Christianity was perhaps due less to the æsthetic than to the 'voluptuous' side of that religion. It is one of his frequent sayings that 'la religion offre aux âmes voluptueuses une volupté de plus: la volupté de se perdre'. Unable to indulge in this volupté himself, he was always drawn towards it, even fascinated by it. According to one of his intimates (Paul Gsell), Anatole France's private tastes were, in spite of his atheism, more ecclesiastical than those of any other mortal. In addition, he was an enthusiastic collector of religious objects.

The eclectic trend of Anatole France came out, in fact, in his strongest or perhaps his only passion—the passion for collecting. He was a great collector, a connoisseur and an antiquary also with regard to literature. It would be

difficult to find a writer of his calibre who knew how to make a better use of other people's works, of literary and historical antiques. Instead of inventing, he often only paraphrased, altered and 'stylized' the material suggested to him by old literatures, by folklore, by legends, contes and memoirs. While taking his goods where he found them, he still turned them into perfect narratives of his own—narratives which one can fully enjoy in books such as Le puits de Ste. Claire, or Les contes de Jacques Tournebroche. Nor was he incapable of the painstaking research of an erudite. On the La vie de Jeanne d'Arc he worked for about twenty years. And the result was well worth while.

Owing to his literary, historical, philosophic and antiquarian interests, Anatole France was necessarily at his best in those two literary genres which appeal, by their very nature, to eclectics: the causerie and the pastiche. The four volumes of his La vie littéraire, for instance, may be devoid of depth, at times even of a reliable approach; yet they are exquisite causeries. In such books again as his Les opinions de Jérôme Coignard, or Sur la pierre blanche, one finds brilliant examples of that pastiche which substitutes a clever mechanical arrangement for an organic structure without forfeiting its own interest and charm. They also prove that, whenever his creative power began to falter, Anatole France knew how to spur it on by purely intellectual or even by various 'bookish' stimuli of a belated humanist and an antiquary. Unfortunately, there is a 'bookish' touch also in his conversations. However witty these may be, they strike one in the end as being too much alike, without marked individual differences. Even such a tour de force of psychological and artistic skill as his Le lys rouge suffers from the fact that the characters in it talk as if they were rehearsing cleverly written parts.

#### IV

With all that, Anatole France is primarily a conteur who distils his experiences, impressions and ideas in such a way as to produce the desired effect by a minimum of means. His simplicity is that of a complex modern mind who has mastered all the material at his disposal. The simple and naïve exterior appeals to him also as a veil for an ironic sting, or a pointe, which is far from being naïve. The end of his Le procurateur de Judée, for instance, is the more powerful because of the apparently casual chat which leads to it.

Yet in spite of his deliberate craft, Anatole France can give the impression of freshness, and even of the ingenuity of a child. Books in which he describes his own childhood and youth (Le livre de mon ami, Pierre Nozière, La vie en fleur, etc.) preserve all the charm of naturalness and spontaneity, although they must have been written with as conscious an artistic discipline as the rest of his work. The same could be said of his Les désirs de Jules Servien, or of Le crime de Sylvestre Bonnard. Particularly in dealing with children Anatole France knows how to become childlike without being childish—a quality which alone requires much wisdom. His 'Dialogue upon Fairy Tales' shows a fine grasp of a child's mind, while his 'Honey-Bee' (L'abeille) is, despite its coldness, a valuable contribution to the children's classics.

As a psychologist he is subtle rather than profound. An amusing paradoxical situation interests him more than various 'depths' of the human soul. His psychological finesse reaches its height in his descriptions of love, or better—of voluptuousness, for he hardly ever separates the two. Otherwise he prefers to treat his characters in

a vivid two-dimensional way, or else to render them in terms of discussion and conversation. In the latter case he often displays not only his art and wit, but also his knowledge of a 'bookman' who is anxious to explain, to inform, and now and then to instruct. It was first of all through this channel that a new and almost unexpected feature gradually began to assert itself, namely, his didactic vein.

This vein looms forward in some of his later works, even at the risk of encroaching upon his art. His otherwise delightful mouthpiece, Bergeret (in the series, L'histoire contemporaine), becomes at times positively annoying; not so much by his ideas as by his invariable didactic comments apropos of every trifle. Even when talking to his dog (in M. Bergeret à Paris), he disburdens himself of a long tirade about the weaknesses of humanity and concludes it—quite seriously—with commonplaces such as these: 'You do not know (the tirade is still addressed to his dog) that true strength lies in wisdom and that through wisdom alone nations rise to greatness. You do not know that that which makes the glory of the nations is not the senseless clamour raised in public places, but the noble thought. You do not know that those who have suffered imprisonment, outrage and exile, for justice' sake, have honoured their country in the act. You do not know.'

However much unlike Anatole France such passages may sound, they are less surprising if regarded as symptoms of a period in which he tried to go beyond mere 'dilettantism', to embrace a cause, or even to fight for it. But in that attempt he showed both his good will and his limitations.

V

The chief limitation of Anatole France consisted in his very scepticism, which became for him a truly Epicurean 'cushion of doubt'. In essence he questioned life only in so far as was compatible with his inner comfort. Whenever he stumbled upon some really disturbing aspect or idea, he hastily 'sublimated' it through his art, or else turned it into a witty and flippant paradox. Confusing refined voluptuousness with sensitiveness, the fullness of existence with an eclectic variety of impressions, sensations and ideas, he ran the danger of turning life itself into a variegated pastiche without a real centre. Having adopted scepticism as a safety-valve against the dogmatic fixity of thought and life, he made of scepticism a dogma which threatened to sap his active will. After all, one is alive as long as one acts; and one can act only by canalizing one's entire will in a definite direction. Radical scepticism is bound to deny or at least to avoid all direction. It may make one 'free', yet there is no greater burden than freedom for its own sake. As Nietzsche said, it is not the question, 'art thou free?' that is important; but 'what is it thou art free for?' Which brings us to the problem of choice, of direction, of value.

Anatole France realized the danger of his own 'freedom' only after having indulged in it to the full. It was mainly from the middle of the 'nineties that he began to show efforts to 'choose', to work himself into a genuine belief in humanity, and even to be a spokesman of better times to come. The courageous part he played in the Dreyfus affair is well known. As if anxious to find an active focus, he successively embraced the cause of socialism, of ardent patriotism, and flirted at last even

with bolshevism. It was from then that Anatole France periodically grew louder, didactic, at times even aggressive. Yet the very excess of his intelligence must have been a great obstacle. The fact that he wavered between so many 'isms' is in itself a proof that he did not succeed in imposing a credo upon himself, however much he may have wanted to. His voice sounded more convincing when he had no convictions than when he vainly tried to have them.

It was Jérôme Coignard, one of Anatole France's most engaging characters, who proclaimed the sterility of truths detected by intelligence alone, and added: 'To help mankind one must throw aside all reason as an encumbrance, and rise on the wings of enthusiasm'. But such enthusiasm was lacking in Anatole France. He was the product of too 'intelligent' a culture, and the child of too experienced an epoch, to be able to embrace it wholeheartedly. He knew neither the verve of true affirmation, nor the tragic despair of a complete negation. And so he remained to the end only a sceptical dilettante of life and a great littérateur whose art, with all its charm, is somewhat cold and static. No wonder that the younger generation

turned away from him!

## DESMOND MACCARTHY

## THE WORLD OF HENRY JAMES

Mr. E. F. Benson has published a short selection of Henry James's letters to Arthur Benson (Elkin Mathews). He says in his preface: 'Those who had the privilege of hearing him (Henry James) talk recognize when they read his letters his authentic living voice, even as those who are soaked in the style of his later books salute in them the handling and habit of his letters. All three are one and they are all he: and all, after this conversion, are his natural mode of expression. He had hewed out this new style, and it took possession of him in spoken word, in letter-writing, and in his books.'

In Henry James's later letters his voice is audible. Nor is this surprising, for his letters were often dictated, and his conversation, in its search for the right word, its amplifications, hesitations and interpolated afterthoughts. resembled dictation. This sounds portentous, not to say boring: indeed, it was at times embarrassing. But-and this made all the difference—he was fascinating. The spell he exercised by his style was exercised in his conversation. Phrases of abstruse exaggerated drollery or of the last intellectual elegance flowered in it profusely. At first you might feel rather conscience-stricken for having set in motion, perhaps by a casual question, such tremendous mental machinery. It seemed really too bad to have put him to such trouble, made him work and weigh his words like that, and if, through the detestable habit of starting any topic rather than be silent, you had

broached one in which you were not interested, you might be well punished. There was something at once so painstaking, serious, and majestical in the procedure of his mind that you shrank from diverting it, and thus the whole of your little precious time with him might be wasted. How often this happened in my case during our fifteen years' acquaintance! I still regret those bungled opportunities. In conversation he could not help giving his best, the stereotyped and perfunctory being abhorrent to him. Each talk was thus a fresh adventure, an opportunity of discovering for himself what he thought about books and human beings. His respect for his subject was only equalled, one noticed, by his respect for that delicate deliberate instrument for recording and comparing impressions, his own mind. He absolutely refused to hustle it, and his conversational manner was largely composed of reassuring and soothing gestures intended to allay, or anticipate, signs of impatience. The sensation of his hand on my shoulder in our pausing rambles together was, I felt, precisely an exhortation to patience. 'Wait,' that reassuring pressure seemed to be humorously saying, 'wait. I know, my dear fellow, you are getting fidgety, but wait—and we shall enjoy together the wild pleasure of discovering what "Henry James" thinks of this matter -for my part, I dare not hurry him!' His possession of this kind of double consciousness was one of the first characteristics one noticed. Often we would both seem to be waiting, palpitating with the same curiosity, for the ultimate verdict. At such moments the working of his mind used to fascinate me, as though I were watching an hydraulic engine through a window, its great smooth wheel and shining piston moving with ponderous ease through a vitreous dusk. The confounding thing was that

the great machine could be set in motion by putting a penny in the slot. And, alas! one often had only half-pennies in one's pocket!

Such was Henry James the talker, Henry James the writer is still with us; I propose to attempt to find his formula.

He was a conscious artist, who knew more clearly than most English novelists what he wished to do and how he must set about it. His books were therefore themes for critics who were anxious to convince a generation, persuaded to the contrary by many dazzling achievements in an opposite manner, that fiction need not be formless, and that a novelist's mastery is shown in unfolding a situation to which every incident contributes. To Henry James the novel was not a hold-all into which any valuable observations and reflections can be stuffed, nor was it merely peptonized experience. He was an artist and a creator. Of course the world he created bore a vital relation to experience, as all fiction must if it is to bewitch and move us; but the characters in that world, in whose fate and emotions he interested us, existed in a medium which was not the atmosphere we ordinarily breathe. That medium was his own mind. Just as there is a world called 'Dickens', another called 'Balzac', so there is a world called 'Henry James'. When we speak of the 'reality' of such worlds it only means that we have been successfully beguiled. We are really paying homage to the shaping imagination of a creator. How independent of the actual world, and how dependent for their vitality upon the world in which they are set characters in fiction are, becomes clear the moment we imagine a character moved from one imaginary world into another. If Pecksniff were transplanted into The Golden Bowl, he would become extinct; and how

incredible would 'the Dove' be in the pages of Martin Chuzzlewit! The same holds good of characters constructed piecemeal from observation when introduced into a world created by an overflow of imagination. They become solecisms: either they kill the book or the book kills them. The unforgivable artistic fault in a novelist is failure to maintain tone. In this respect Henry James never failed. His characters always belonged to his own world, and his world was always congruous with his characters. What sort of a world was it? And what were its relations to our common experience which made it interesting? The answers to these two questions, which the work of every creative artist prompts, need not be separated. The answer to the one will suggest the answer to the other.

It is important to emphasize Henry James's worldcreating power, because in every novelist who possesses it, that is the most important faculty. Yet in his case it has often been overlooked. Critics have found in his work so much else to interest them—his style, his methods, his subtlety. From their comments it might be supposed that his main distinction lay in being a psychologist, or an observer, or an inventor of a fascinating, but-so some thought—an indefensible style. Yet to regard him primarily as an observer or psychologist or as a maker of phrases is not only to belittle him, but to make the mistake we made when first Ibsen came into our ken. It seems hardly credible that we should have taken Ibsen for a realist, but we did. Despite his rat-wife, wild-duck, towers and ice-churches; despite the strange intensity of his characters, which alone might have put us on the right track; despite the deep-sea pressure of the element in which they had their being, and the perverse commonness of the objects which surrounded them—as of things

perceived in some uncomfortable dream—Ibsen's battle was fought under the banner of realism. Because his characters threw such a vivid light on human nature and our predicaments we mistook them for photographs. And yet we knew all the time what we meant by 'an Ibsen character' as clearly as we knew what 'a Dickens character' meant. The fact that we can also be understood when we speak of a 'Henry James character' is a proof that his imagination, too, was essentially creative.

Most great novelists have given to their creations an excess of some faculty predominant in themselves. Thus Meredith's characters are filled to an unnatural degree with the beauty and courage of life, while Balzac gives to his a treble dose of will and appetite. The men and women in Henry James's novels, the stupid as well as the intelligent, show far subtler powers of perception than such men and women actually have. It was only by exaggerating, consciously or unconsciously, that quality in them that he could create a world that satisfied his imagination. With this exception his work is full of delicately observed actualities. His men and women are neither more heroic nor single hearted, nor more base than real people, and, granted their superior thoughtreading faculties and the concentration of their curiosity upon each other, events follow one another in his stories as they would in real life. The reader may sometimes find himself saying: 'No once without corroborative evidence would act on such a far-fetched guess as that'; but he will never find himse elf saying (granted the subtlety of these people): 'That is not the way things happen'. Whether his characters are children of leisure and pleasure, jaded journalists, apath etic or wily disreputables, hard working or dilatory artissts, they are all incorrigibly preoccupied with human nature; with watching their own emotions and the complex shifting relations and intimate dramas around them. There is a kind of collected self-consciousness and clairvoyance about them all: they watch, they feel, they compare notes. There is hardly a minor character in his later books, not a butler or a telegraph clerk, who, if he opens his lips twice, does not promptly show the makings of a gossip of genius. There are other generalizations to be made about the people of Henry James's world equally important, but this is the most comprehensive. For the critic this peculiarity has a claim to priority, not on æsthetic grounds, but because it leads to the centre of his subject: what, in Henry James's case, was the determining impulse which made him create the particular world he did?

In that astonishing record of imaginative adventure, The American Scene, he continually refers to himself as the 'restless analyst', speaking of himself as a man 'hagridden by the twin demons of observation and imagination'. The master-faculty of Henry James was this power of analysing his impressions, of going into them not only far, but, as they say in Norse fairy-tales, 'far and farther than far'. Indeed, there are only three other novelists whom a passion for finality in research and statement has so beset, for whom the assurance that everything that there was to be said had indeed been at any rate attempted, was the sole condition of a Sabbath's rest: Proust, whom Henry James did not live to read, and Balzac (with whom the later Henry James had more sympathy than any other fellow-craftsman) and Dostoevsky. The last two were very different men from himself, labouring in other continents. Dostoevsky's subject is always the soul of man, and ultimately its relation to God; his deepest study is

man as he is when he is alone with his soul. In Henry James, on the contrary, the same passion of research is directed to the social side of man's nature, his relations to his fellow-men. The universe and religion are as completely excluded from his books as if he had been an eighteenth-century writer. The sky above his people, the earth beneath them, contains no mysteries for them. He is careful never to permit them to interrogate these. Mr. Chesterton has called Henry James a mystic: the truth is that he is perhaps the least mystical of all writers who have ever concerned themselves with the inner life. It is not the mystical (the mysticism would have shattered his world) which attracts him, but a very different thing, the mysterious: namely, whatever in life fascinates by being hidden, ambiguous, illusive and hard to understand. And this brings us again straight up to the question of his directing impulse as an artist.

It was an impulse to conceive the world in a light which (a religious interpretation of man's nature being excluded) would give most play to his master faculties of investigation. It was a desire, or rather a necessity, to see people in such a way as made them, their emotions and their relations to each other, inexhaustible subjects for the exploring mind. A single formula for a writer is justly suspect; but entertain this one for a moment on approval. It may prove to be 'the pattern in the carpet'.

In the first place, it explains his choice of themes. His long career was a continual search for more and more recondite and delicate ones. He begins with cases of conscience, in which, however, already the shades seemed fine to his contemporaries, and in which verdicts depended upon evidence not always visible to 'twelve good men and true'. The formula explains his early fondness—

long before he had found a method of constructing a world of recondite possibilities—of ending with that substitute for mystery, the note of interrogation. It explains also his excitement in discovering Europe, especially the discovery of those secluded corners of European society where dark deposits of experience might be postulated without extravagance. (In his America everything was depressingly obvious.) It explains his passionate interest in the naïve consciousness of his Americans when confronted with people with more complex standards and traditions. Did they or did they not understand? It explains his later interest in children, in whom it is puzzling to fix the moment of dawning comprehension. It explains his marked preference for faithful failure as a subject over the soon exhausted interest of success. It explains in a measure his comparative lack of interest in the life of the senses (there is no mystery in the senses compared with the mind); also his efforts to keep in the background, so that they might gather an impenetrable portentousness, crude facts, professions, adulteries, swindles and even murders, which nevertheless, for the sake of the story, had sometimes to go through the empty form of occurring in his books. It explains the attraction a magnificently privileged class had for his art, his 'Olympians', whose surroundings allowed latitude to the supposition of a wonderfully richer consciousness. It explains the almost total exclusion from his world of specimens of labouring humanity, to whom no such complexity can be with any plausibility attributed—a dustman in the world of Henry James is an inconceivable monster. It accounts, too, for the blemishes in his books; his refusal to admit that such a thing as a molehill can exist for a man with eyes in his head, and (how it seems

to fit!) for his reluctance, even when occasion demanded it, to call a spade anything so dull and unqualified as a spade. It explains the fascination of his style, which conveyed amazingly the excitement of a quest, the thrill of approaching some final precision of statement. And above all, it explains why he came to endow his men and women with more and more of his own penetration, tenderness and scrupulousness, till at last he created a world worthy of his own master faculty, in which human beings, when confronted, saw mysteries in each other's gestures, and profundities in each other's words, and took joy in each other's insight like brave antagonists in each other's strength: a world in which they could exclaim about each other that they were 'wonderful' and 'beautiful'. where they belonged to each other, or fought each other. on levels of intimacy which had never been described before.

The words which he found to describe the characters in this world whom he loved are unrivalled for revealing delicacy. His method is to present them to us through some other character dowered with his own power of appreciation. Mrs. Stringham in The Wings of the Dove is, for instance, the medium through which we first catch a glimpse of Milly. Mrs. Stringham is first conscious of the immense rich extravagant background of New York from which Milly springs, and of which 'the rare creature was the final flowering'; next of 'a high, dim, charming ambiguous oddity which was even better' in Milly herself, who seemed, on top of all that, to enjoy boundless freedom, the freedom of the wind in the desert. 'It was unspeakably touching to be so equipped and yet to have been reduced by fortune to little humble-minded mistakes. . . . She had arts and idiosyncrasies of which no

great account could have been given, but which were a daily grace if you lived with them; such as the art of being almost tragically impatient and yet making it light as air; of being inexplicably sad and yet making it clear as noon; of being unmistakably gay and yet making it it as soft as dusk.'

Although his world is peopled with subtler men and women than any other novelist's, the crown does not go to the clever. It is tempting to describe him as an inveterate moralist, who, finding ordinary scales too clumsy to weigh finer human qualities, employs instead æsthetic weights and measures. The consequent reversal of the verdict was one of his favourite themes. 'There are no short cuts', he seemed to say, 'to being beautiful; to be beautiful you must be really good.' He made us understand better the meaning of intimacy and the beauty of goodness.

When I say 'us', I am thinking of my own generation when we discovered him. We young ones, at any rate, read him, apart from our delight in his phrases and metaphors, for his substance, for precisely that side of his work which appears now to be wearing thin. Our generation, at least that part of it with which I was best acquainted and most at home, was interested in those parts of experience which could be regarded as ends in themselves. Morality was either a means to attaining these goods of the soul or it was nothing—just as the railway system existed to bring people together and to feed them, or the social order that as many 'ends' as possible should be achieved. These ends naturally fined themselves down to personal relations, æsthetic emotions and the pursuit of truth. We were perpetually in search of distinctions; our most ardent discussions were attempts

to fix some sort of a scale of values for experience. The tendency was for the stress to fall on feeling rightly rather than upon action. It would be an exaggeration to sav we cared not a sprat either for causes or our own careers (appetite in both directions comes with eating, and we had barely begun to nibble), but those interests were subordinate. Henry James was above all a novelist of distinctions; he was, indeed, the master in fiction of the art of distinguishing. His philosophy amounted to this: to appreciate exquisitely was to live intensely. We suspected, I remember, that he overvalued subtlety as an ingredient in character and was perhaps too 'social' in his standards, employing, for instance, 'charm' too often as the last test of character. But whether or not we always agreed with his estimate of values, he was pre-eminently interested in what interested us; that is to say, in disentangling emotions, in describing their appropriate objects and in showing in what subtle ways friendships might be exquisite, base, exciting, dull or droll. That his characters were detached from the big common struggling world, that its vague murmur floated in so faintly through their windows, that they moved and had their being in an environment entirely composed of personal relations, æsthetic emotions, and historic associations, seemed to us unimportant limitations to his art. Nor were we particularly interested in the instincts or the will compared with the play of the intelligence. What was the will but a means, a servant? Or the instincts but the raw stuff out of which the imagination moulded a life worth contemplating?

It still seems to me, on the whole, a sound philosophy; only the fiction which reflects these things to exclusion of all else now appears to me to shut out much which is both more absorbing and more important than I once supposed—also even to falsify the flavour of those very experiences on which it exclusively dwells.

I have described Henry James's youthful audience during those years when his books in his later manner were appearing, because such a description indicates the angle from which his work must always appear important. He cared immensely for spiritual decency: nothing in life beguiled him into putting anything before that. He had a tender heart, an even more compassionate imagination, but a merciless eye.

I knew him for over fifteen years, but I only saw him at long intervals. In spite of admiration and curiosity I left our meetings entirely to chance, for I soon discovered two daunting facts about him. Firstly, that he was easily bored (not merely in an ordinary but in an excruciating sense of the word), and secondly that he minded intensely the dislocations and disappointments which are inevitable in all human relations. They made him groan and writhe and worry. The measure of how much he minded them could be read in the frequency, extravagance and emphasis of his signals that all was really well, across even those small rifts (to him they had the horror of gulfs) which absence and accident open up between people. Many have not understood the elaborate considerateness which is so marked in his correspondence. As I read Henry James, it was his sense both of the gulf between human beings and the difficulty of bridging it which made him abound in such reassurances. His manner of receiving you expressed an anxiety to show you (sometimes comic in desperate thoroughness of intention) that whatever might have happened in the interval, on his side, at least, the splinters had kept new

and fine; so that if your half of the tally was in a similar condition, the two would dovetail at touch. I have seen him keep a lady in a paralysed condition for five minutes while he slowly recalled everything about her. And if your talk with him had been something of a failure, his farewell expressed that what you had wanted, yet failed to get, he had also wanted, and that nothing must blind you to his recognition of any affection or admiration you might be so generous as to feel for 'your old Henry James'.

I imagine being interrupted here by a pointed question: 'But did not this agitated anxiety to signal defeat its own end and make complications?' It often did so; just as some of his letters, long as they are, were sometimes almost entirely composed of signals and gestures. But to many sensitive natures who find the world only too full of callous, off-hand people, this exquisite and agitated recognition of their own identity and of their relation to himself was a delightful refreshment. He himself was clearly one of the most sensitive of men. The importance to him of urbanity, money, privacy, lay in the fact that they were salves. His art was a refuge to him as well as the purpose of his life. The brutality and rushing confusion of the world, where the dead are forgotten, old ties cynically snapped, old associations disregarded, where one generation tramples down the other, where the passions are blind, and men and women are satisfied with loves and friendships which are short, common and empty, horrified him. I picture him as flying with frightened eyes and stopped ears from that City of Destruction, till the terrified bang of his sanctuary door leaves him palpitating but safe; free to create a world which he could people with beings who had leisure and

the finest faculties for comprehending and appreciating each other, where the reward of goodness was the recognition of its beauty and the past was not forgotten. His sense of the past—of the social world's, of his own—which he recorded with a subtle actuality and piety never excelled in autobiography—was almost the deepest sense in him. Such reverence for human emotions is usually associated with the religious sense, but that is singularly absent from his work. While we read his books only the great dome of civilization is above our heads—never the sky, and under our feet its parti-coloured mosaic—never the earth. All that those two words 'sky' and 'earth' stand for in metaphor is absent.

## EDITORIAL NOTES ON THE AUTUMN PUBLISHING SEASON

This autumn publishing season promises to be a rich one. At least four historical books of importance have already appeared. Professor George Trevelyan's England Under Queen Anne, Vol. I (Longmans. 21s.), The Age of the Chartists. by Lawrence and Barbara Hammond (Longmans, 12s. 6d.). and England in the Age of the American Revolution, by L. B. Namier (Vol. I. Macmillan. 25s.). Among other books of historical interest two of the most important are the Locarno Volume of Lord D'Abernon's Diary (Hodder & Stoughton. 21s.), and the first volume of the third series of Letters of Queen Victoria, 1886-1901 (Murray. £,1 15s.). Among notable Memoirs are Chapters of Autobiography, by Arthur James, Lord Balfour (Cassell. 10s. 6d.)—a fragment; Bengal Lancer, by Francis Yeats-Brown (Gollancz. os.). This book has already succeeded; its success is due to its being an entertaining personal narrative, and an account of the effect of India and Indian thought and religion on the mind of a British soldier. (Everybody wants to understand India now—if they can.) And lastly, Liaison, by General Spears (Heinemann. 25s.). In spite of the inevitable decline of interest in the war, this book is bound to be widely read. It is so vivid and clear, and contains unforgettable incidents admirably told. But these books, like Mr. Arnold Bennett's novel, Imperial Palace, and Mr. Somerset Maugham's Cakes and Ale, are sure of due attention; while the main object of this

editorial note is to draw attention to a few new books to which prominence may or may not be given in the Press.

Literature and the Occult Traditions; Studies in Philosophical Poetry, by Denis Seurat (Bell. 12s. 6d.). Most great poets are poets of ideas, and Professor Seurat examines, amongst other great men, Spenser, Milton, Blake, Goethe, Shelley, Hugo, Whitman and Nietzsche. The interest of his book lies in its relating certain of their ideas to conceptions found in mythology and occult doctrine. What are likely to be new to most readers are M. Seurat's extracts from the Zohar, one of the main, though little-known, sources of cabalistic doctrine. The last chapters deal with much curious thought which is interwoven with Spenser's Faerie Queen, and has never been fully explored.

Cobbett's Rural Rides, edited by G. D. H. and M. Cole, three vols. (Peter Davies. £5 5s.). This is far and away the best edition of this famous book. It contains the Irish Tour, which has been printed for the first time from Cobbett's Political Register. The historical preface and notes are admirable. The edition is delightful to the eye also.

Ibsen, the Master Builder, by Adolph Zucker (Butterworth. 10s. 6d.). This is not a well-written book, but it is by far the fullest biography of Ibsen which has appeared in English. It is indispensable to those interested in the dramatist.

In Messrs. Cape's 'Life and Letters' Series (4s. 6d. each), there are two important reprints: André Siegfried's America Comes of Age (the best general survey of America), and Microbe Hunters, by Paul de Kruif. Messrs. Bell have published selections from Robert Southey's The Doctor, a book which, by the by, contains the famous story of 'The Three Bears'. It is a good bedside book for those

who enjoy a mixture of fantasy and out of the way erudition, concocted by pedantic high spirits.

Among biographies The Life of Robert Burns, by Catherine Carswell, is well written. It will exasperate sentimental worshippers of the poet, though it is not iconoclastic in intention. It does not conceal Burns's frailties. It is written from the point of view that these should not diminish sympathy or admiration. It was a difficult book to write because biographical material, in the case of Burns, is in a state of confusion. In some cases it has been mutilated and destroyed with a view to protecting the poet's moral reputation. The author has had the opportunity of reading the MS. of Professor Lancey Fergusson's (U.S.A.) forthcoming edition of Burns's Letters, which will be the most thorough of them all.

Among the publications of Messrs. Faber & Faber there is a good study of Whistler, by Mr. James Laver (155.), who has an elegant pen and a knowledge of the period; and also an entertaining biography of the celebrated Mr. Barrington (The Prince of Pickpockets, by R. S. Lambert, 125. 6d.), who, after a daring and successful career as a thief was sent to the hulks, and spent his last years revered and honoured as High Constable of Parramatta.

The Melody and the Lyric from Chaucer to the Cavaliers, by John Murray Gibbon (Dent. 12s. 6d.); this book is an examination of English lyrics and ballads, from the musician's point of view, between those dates. Mr. Gibbon discovers that the English lyric up to Herrick had a sequence of consonants and vowels which made it peculiarly 'singable', and his researches into lyrical literature and into melodies written for lyrics are a valuable contribution to literary history. It is an important

book, and not only to musicians, for it throws light on the nature of verbal music and its relation to music. It is an admirable piece of work and astonishingly cheap at the price.

Mr. Belloc has published two books this Autumn: Wolsey (Cassell. 15s.), and a fantasia, The Man who made Gold, illustrated by G. K. Chesterton, Arrowsmith. 7s. 6d.). One of the favourite day-dreams of the indigent is the discovery of the 'Philosopher's Stone', but the tribulations which might follow its discovery are ignored by the day-dreamer. Here he will find them set forth with high-spirited irony and with Mr. Belloc's peculiar touch which makes the whole of modern civilization seem grotesque. Darting penetration and extravagant fun.

Mr. Belloc's Wolsey is vigorous, clear, and dramatic. What he gives us (not in dialogue, of course) is drama; on the surface the drama of character, and beneath that the conflict of the Renaissance and Christendom. His master faculty as an historian, apart from his power of description, is his gift of concluding, and of deciding rapidly from the evidence before him where the real issue lies. Wolsey's life is told in five Acts, and the stage on which he played his part is brilliantly and rapidly described. The pace at which the drama proceeds is exhilarating, and the perspectives opened at every turn take the eye far into the past and deep into causes of change.

There is another book which has been out some time; I mention it because it has not been sufficiently reviewed—and for a simple reason: it is a book which exacts too much knowledge in a reviewer and also takes too long to read. I refer to Legouis and Cazamian's History of English Literature, two volumes in one, 1440 pages in all. (Dent.

18s.). There is no adequate history of English literature: Mr. Legouis and M. Cazamian's book is the best stopgap. Judged as a book of reference it is accurate, as a map of English literature it is interesting, and in its estimates of particular authors it is often subtle and fair. It will be invaluable to young students, and it is the kind of book which supplements an incomplete library.

Among recent new novels there are three 'younggeneration' novels of particular interest. The Other Man's Saucer, by J. Keith Winter (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.), is a study of boyhood and undergraduate life of acrid and spirited intensity. It is exhilarating, though the dust and ashes flavour in it is pungent. To an older generation what is interesting about it is its emotional tempo and its peculiar spiritual cynicism. Another symptomatic book is They Die Young, by John Sommerfield (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.). This also is a study in youthful failure in spite of courage: the failure to find a satisfying reality on the part of a young man who chucked comfort and lived in the adventure of the moment. It is arrestingly written. It crackles and blazes with an energetic, thwarted sincerity. The last young-generation novel of which I can speak myself is Mr. Gathorne Hardy's Lacebury Manor (Collins. 7s. 6d.). It is a pastiche, a charming Victorian love story. It is not ironical. It takes place in an atmosphere of soothing and delicate certainties. The temporal colour is carefully done. Some of the young want a rest from 'facing facts', and there are plenty of older people who will be pleased with this rest cure in Lacebury Manor.

## READERS' REPORTS

Reading Mr. Massingham's The Friend of Shelley (Cobden · Sanderson. 21s.), makes me reflect on several things. Once more, with pleasure, on the extraordinary power of so gentle and idealistic a nature as Shelley's —on which Mr. Massingham is occasionally eloquent—but also, with concern, on the dangers of too much tolerance, and on the effect of psycho-analysis upon literary biography and criticism.

The last two chapters of the book I read with interest; they contain material never before collected about Trelawny's various homes, wives, and children.

But I am left wondering why Mr. Massingham wrote a book of three hundred and twenty-two pages on Trelawny at all. There are not enough facts known about Trelawny to make a book. When the object of that book is to whitewash Trelawny the position is still worse, for if the facts about Trelawny are few, the creditable facts are fewer. Mr. Massingham flies to the new psychology, and to more mystic regions, for the evidence that simple facts refuse him. But psychology, whether new or old, is a science and must be used scientifically to be of any value. Mr. Massingham gets entangled in endlesslyrepeated assertions about states of mind and soul for which he has no possible data. And, unfortunately, he does not reserve this method for Trelawny, but writes many pages about Shelley and Byron only original by virtue of containing imponderables of this kind: 'Shelley overcame death before he died, because the force of his transcendental and yet elementally simple essence projected him beyond it. A confirmation of this view is given by Shelley's elevation of spirits and freedom from ill-health in the two months', etc. Confirmation enough for a séance of spiritualists, perhaps, but surely not for the readers of literary biography! Byron, he says elsewhere, died 'not unwillingly, though not so willingly as Shelley'.

Mr. Massingham pretends to a very intimate knowledge of Byron even before he died, and attributes to Trelawny an enormous influence upon him, though himself quoting, as practically the only information we possess of Byron's estimate of Trelawny, the remark: Tre was an excellent fellow until he took to imitating my Childe Harold and Don Juan'—a typically witty, contemptuous and exclusive remark. But Mr. Massingham says that the effect of Trelawny on Byron was 'electrifying', and that Byron's reaction against Trelawny's romantic expectations of him was 'destructive of his finer nature'. Byron was not really ever so feeble before he went to Greece, nor so entirely splendid afterwards as Mr. Massingham makes out; but he wants to find in the rottenness of Byron at Pisa some defence for the rottenness of Trelawny at Missolonghi.

When dealing with Byron's effect on Trelawny, he is on rather firmer ground. His idea that Trelawny suffered from an inferiority complex fits the facts, and is useful enough, if only he did not seem to assume that to attribute conduct to an inferiority complex is to excuse it. Many of Trelawny's lies can be attributed to an inferiority complex, but were none the less lies, and intended, like all lies, to serve a purpose. Mr. Massingham covers them all with such terms as 'representation of things' not 'laboured' or 'hardened into a mould'. Trelawny, he says, was 'not Jesuitical in his approach'; he 'made a real working partnership between life and truth'. It was a

partnership, rather—a murderous and miserable partnership—between the good and bad in Trelawny. And here it is at work: to Stanhope, just after Byron's death, 'the world has lost its greatest man and I my best friend'; to Mary Shelley, a week later: 'I wish he had lived a little longer that he might have witnessed . . . how I would have triumphed over his weak spirit'. Mr. Massingham says this is quite all right—it is just 'that inferiority complex', and 'the inconsistency between this letter and the one that precedes it is only a surface one, glaring as it is. In those few lines there crept out of the burrows of the subconscious his true opinion of Byron.' But if it was his true opinion it must not be attributed to an inferiority complex.

Long gropings in these burrows unfit Mr. Massingham for the daylight of facts. Trelawny loved Shelley-it is his one great claim on our sympathy; but there is really no evidence that the feeling was returned. Mr. Massingham claims not only that Trelawny was loved by Shelley, but that he 'deeply impressed' Shelley's imagination. He finds what he calls a 'loving gesture' in a supposed version of the poem To Edward Williams; it is not a loving gesture of Shelley's, but a howling blunder of Massingham's. Shelley, he says, wrote a version of the poem in which for the 'Dear friends, dear friend' of the third stanza he substituted 'Dear friend Trelawny', thus making Trelawny the recipient of expressions of devotion intended for Jane Williams, and probably written before Shelley had ever met Trelawny. Mr. Massingham has most grossly misread the textual note in the Oxford Shelley.

The fragmentary drama about an Italian maiden provides the evidence for Trelawny's effect on Shelley's

imagination—and far more besides. This drama would have contained the character of a Pirate, according to Mary Shelley's note, and this hypothetical Pirate would, according to Williams's diary, have been a sketch of Trelawny: but the fragment ends before the Pirate begins. Yet Mr. Massingham says: 'the intense symbolism of Shelley's mind speaks the whole drama in those words: 'a man of savage but noble nature'. Those words—such as they are—are from Mary's note. He continues: 'this draft of an unfinished drama appears to me to unmask the character of Trelawny more faithfully than all the notices of the critics'.

The fact is, there was more in Trelawny than Mr. Massingham conveys. There are passages in his letters more calculated to make us forgive his egoism and futility and cruelty than all this formless and foundationless psychologizing. Mr. Massingham quotes hardly any of them.

Modern British Authors: Their First Editions. Compiled by B. D. Cutler and Villa Stiles. (George Allen & Unwin. £1 rs. net.) This is an attempt, of American origin, to liven up bibliography; to make it snappy. The endeavour is as interesting as its failure is lamentable. This book contains bibliographical check lists of the first editions of forty modern English authors. It contains 171 pages, and when we see that it includes Kipling, Shaw and Wilde among its authors we cannot grumble at short measure.

There is hardly a single author included in the book of whom a printed bibliography is not already available, and it is hardly unfair to say that the additions made by the compilers of the present work consist almost entirely of errors in fact. As a work of reference the book is worse than worthless; it is misleading.

We list a few of the grossest errors here.

- p. 12. Second Childhood of John Bull. The issue which is described as the earliest is actually a remainder.
- p. 13. The Guerdon is described as published in London.
  It is a pirated publication issued in New York by a bookseller.
- p. 14. No indication is given that there is more than one issue of *Letters from America*.
- p. 26. The issue of *The Arrow of Gold* described as the first is the second.
- p. 30. No indication is given of there being two issues of Fleet Street and Other Poems.
- p. 31. The Lovat Fraser edition of *Peacock Pie* is described as a reprint. It contains several poems of Mr. de la Mare's which are printed for the first time in this edition.
- p. 32. Of Before Dawn and A Ballad of Christmas there were limited editions of which the compilers are ignorant.
- p. 33. The description of the two issues of *Come Hither* bears no relation to the facts.
- p. 35. The 'fable' about the first issue of South Wind is repeated, despite the fact that Mr. Secker himself exposed its falsehood in the pages of this magazine.
- p. 66. Quattrocentisteria was published in 1898. The 1904 edition, described here as the first, is the third.
- p. 67. The footnote appended to *The Wreath* belongs rightly to *Songs of Loss*.
- p. 69. No indication is given that there is more than one issue of either *The Purple Land* or *The Crystal Age*.

- p. 99. The points of issue concerning *The White Peacock*, as given, are less than half the truth and the most important point is omitted.
- p. 99. No knowledge of two issues of Sons and Lovers is shown.
- p. 101. Paintings. No mention is made of the vellum edition.
- p. 101. Pansies. No mention is made of two editions with widely-varying text.
- p. 107. The title of The Three Impostors is wrongly given.
- p. 113. Shakespeare and the Spiritual Life. No mention is made of the signed edition.
- p. 125. An Unsocial Socialist. The first issue is inadequately described. The description given is common to the first and second issues.
- p. 126. Widowers' Houses. The first issue is not described.

  On Going to Church. The Boston edition is dated
  1905.
- p. 127. Dramatic Opinions and Essays. The American edition was issued a year before the one described as first in this book.

Press Cuttings. An inaccurate description of the fourth issue is indicated as denoting the first issue.

Love Among the Artists is not listed at all.

- p. 132. Crock of Gold. No mention is made of two issues. Five New Poems. No mention is made of the large paper edition.
- p. 153. The Island of Dr. Moreau. No mention is made of the first three issues.
- p. 162. Lady Windermere's Fan. Woman of No Importance. Importance of Being Earnest. The Sphinx. No mention

is made of the special issues of the first edition. Oscariana. No mention is made of two issues.

p. 163. What Never Dies. There is no evidence that Wilde translated this.

The Harlot's House. The first edition is dated 1904 and is itself a pirated edition.

A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, by D. H. Lawrence. (The Mandrake Press. 3s. 6d.) 'I want men and women to be able to think sex, fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly.' This, says D. H. Lawrence, is the 'real point' of his essay. 'The evocative power of the so-called obscene words must have been very dangerous to the . . . obscure .... violent natures of the Middle Ages.' But 'we are to-day . . . evolved and cultured far beyond the taboos which are inherent in our culture' (presumably he means the outworn taboos of medieval culture), and our business nowadays is not so much to go in for sex, though that is also necessary, as to realize it. Our minds have somehow been overtaken by our bodies, and mentally we are still floundering about in the obscene darkness and superstition of medieval days: 'the reason being that our ancestors have so assiduously acted sex without ever thinking it or realizing it, that now the act tends to be mechanical, dull . . . and only fresh mental realization will freshen up the experience'. The result of all this is that nowadays there is no 'real' sex, no real emotion: those who have had a 'rich emotional life' (mentallyand here it would seem it is the mind which has overtaken the body) die without ever having experienced a real feeling. Their true sexual nature, their inner sexual man, or woman, has had 'counterfeit' sex palmed off on it, with the devastating result that all married couples sooner or later end up by hating each other; hate being apparently the one sincere emotion left us (poor things) in an age when all others are counterfeit.

Lawrence believes in marriage—'the discovery of Christianity'—and says nothing will do instead; for, says he, fidelity is probably the strongest instinct in the human breast. Yet he advises us not to marry, as our lot will inevitably be the bitterest hatred against our partner. Our inner sexual man, or woman, will rise up in wrath against the double deception of having been the unwitting duper and dupe in a game of humdrum 'counterfeit' sexual intercourse. And what, we ask ourselves, is the way out of this dilemma? We must learn to be clean in our sex-thoughts; we must get in touch with the cosmos, the sun, moon, and stars; and we must celebrate the great pagan religious festivals. This last, apparently, can be achieved by joining the Catholic Church, though he does not actually advise us to do that. But above all things, we must not marry anyone whom we love 'personally'-whatever its opposite may mean-there must be nothing in common intellectually, no 'poetic' sympathyaway with all that trash-or it will be the worse for us. For while these things are good for 'friendship', they are apparently the very fount of counterfeit sex. There can be no true 'blood contact' between such people; their sex will not be metabolistic, but the opposite. Their life history—a matter of his personal observation—will be as follows: marriage, anæmia, hatred, finally madness. Perhaps we should, therefore, make a point of 'beginning with a little aversion?

Lawrence also has views on the way modern women dress. The original reason why women dressed was, he says, modesty. 'When women are sexually alive and quivering

and helplessly attractive, beyond their will, they will always cover themselves . . . with clothes, gracefully.' For if a woman 'were to expose her naked flesh as women do to-day, then men would go mad for her'. 'She has to protect herself, hide herself as much as possible.' But in that case, we ask, why gracefully? There being no 'real' sex now, a woman dresses in order to attract; she wants to 'for the simple reason that she no longer does'. There is something definitely wrong with the world when women's naked flesh has ceased to excite men's desires. Again we ask, has it really? No, but apparently the desires are only 'counterfeit'.

Christ, he says, taught us to abstract ourselves from 'life... the daily, yearly, and seasonal life of birth and death and fruition', and to live in the 'immutable or eternal spirit. But now, after almost three thousand years, now that we are almost abstracted entirely from the rhythmic life... we realize that such abstraction is neither bliss nor liberation, but nullity.' It seems rather hard to blame Christ for a state of affairs probably brought about by industrialism.

The truth is, Lawrence was no thinker. He was a poet; and his feelings too often got the better of him in logical argument. He wanted to escape from his own knotted personality in a 'warm togetherness' with humanity, and he imagined that sex among other things could achieve this. His intentions were excellent, but one sometimes wonders if he was quite sincere in his methods. There is an almost conscious effort to ignore 'mere' reasonableness; as if, in his heart of hearts, he knew that had he paused to consider, he could not but have been aware of the glaring contradictions. He has the manner of one who feels it incumbent on him to maintain a point which

he half knows to be unsound, and so hurries on assertively at a great pace, in order that he may not be overtaken by doubt.

Leading Motives in the Imaging of Shakespeare's Tragedies, by Caroline F. E. Spurgeon. (Humphrey Milford. 2s.) This is a stimulating and original little work, the product of a long investigation. Miss Spurgeon has been at pains to card-index Shakespeare's images and here she gives the result of her count. In a general way, most readers were aware that Romeo is full of flashes of light against a dark unfriendly background, that in Hamlet there is a sinister preoccupation with thoughts of disease and corruption, and that in Othello the sea is never far away. Miss Spurgeon's researches reveal new groups of constellated ideas in Shakespeare's mind. It is a clue which critics and biographers, now that it is put into their hands, will no doubt follow far. Where it will lead them it is too soon to say. Many of us, for example, have suspected that the calamity, whatever its nature, that darkened Shakespeare's middle years had at least a physical aspect, if not a physical origin, and Miss Spurgeon's enumeration furnishes a remarkable hint. Hamlet and Troilus were undoubtedly composed in their present form near together, and Troilus is loaded and overloaded with images of food and the kitchen, often dragged in, or forcing themselves in, when they are not in the least wanted. Fourteen of the characters use them, and no less than forty-four such images-mincemeat, bad eggs, rotten fruit, greasy dishes, jugged hare, stuffing, seething, basting, baking, and so forth—are on the list. One might draw many conclusions. Professor Legouis has already suggested that for some reason Shakespeare's attitude to alcohol underwent

a change in his middle years! Is Antony, with its thronging pictures of vastitude, the immensity of the earth and sea, the magnificence of the sun and the bounty of the seasons, the loudness and the splendour of life, the gesture of a man delivered from an almost mortal sickness and drawing deep breaths of recovered power? Such speculations occur to the reader on every page of this suggestive essay.

A Book of Food, by P. Morton Shand. (Jonathan Cape. 4s. 6d.) This is Romance, and Mr. Morton Shand the perfect guide to its succulent regions. Who could be better qualified, with his trinity in the kitchen: a French wife, a French mother-in-law and a French cook, and a medical grandfather who saved a little patient's life by letting her have the one thing she desired, pickled walnuts? We set off with him in the scarlet chariot in search not of the raw material depicted by Rex Whistler, but of the choicest dishes of every land, which the fancy can instantly savour. Food is the most personal of all questions—I shall rise again on Zampaglione, not on pickled walnuts-and we spar gently as the brown horse prances along. You are absurd with your scandalous scallops, Mr. Shand: they can be delicious fried and served in the shells which nature provided for the purpose, so is a really fresh mackerel with gooseberry sauce. I do not believe you know that raspberries in preserve—yes, I agree that the sinister word jam must never be used-should not be cooked, but only beaten up with boiling sugar. Well, I did think that at least I should get some Blue Vinny. Why did you not spend your winter evenings in stabbing for me two halves of the best Cheddar with a silver stiletto, filling the holes with port—I could trust you to choose the right vintage for this use—and binding them together until the

vinew appeared? Yes, poached eggs I also prohibit in the home, but you scarcely sound the depths which yawn between the sane lover of apples, and the sentimentalist of pears, the Aristotelian and the Platonist, the reader of Donne and of Woodbine Willie. Food, as you justly observe, is the one topic suited to all occasions, far fresher than literature, and less depressing than money, its fellow taboo for so long. But you might have gone farther: it is a key to character. If my neighbour at luncheon says that he does not care for apples raw, or my host presses a Jonathan upon me, I know that there can be no real sympathy between us.

But it is only in the exquisite fantasy life of an evening with Mr. Shand that most of us can consume Langouste Belle Aurore with Sauce Porto, or roast lamb stuffed with Persian pomegranates. Mildred, poor creature, is struggling with English materials, and the wine bill is Arthur's affair: she can only secure the dregs for the kitchen. Certainly he should have his sole, on occasion. Every meal cannot be an occasion, nor should it be: the gourmet is human and will lapse into the gourmand. Her problem is to provide ordinary fare, digestible, palatable and various. She must ring the changes on the inevitable recurrence of any but his pet dishes, and for these he should be kept waiting a trifle longer than he hopes. She must exercise her imagination. Even Mrs. Beeton was not omniscient: permutations and combinations await discovery. Mildred has her ambitions: she would like her name to be eternized. Mr. Shand might stimulate her by a new book, a biographical dictionary of those celebrated in the great art. By the way, he asks whether Sally Lunn has her place in the D.N.B.: no, but the O.E.D. duly dilates on that worthy

daughter of Bath. Mildred, meanwhile, hoping to see her name in the third or fourth edition of the *Gastronomic Biography*, will be content if Arthur says that she is more like a mistress than a wife, or, after one of their rare visits to a restaurant, compares the dishes unfavourably with those she serves at home.

A Woman on her Way, by John van Druten. (Putnam. 7s. 6d.) Some people are certain to say that John van Druten has written a 'shocking book'. The superficial never differentiate between describing things for a good end and a bad one, and it will escape them that the book is almost a tract. 'Good-bye to cocktails' might be said to be its simple lesson.

Elinor, the heroine, is a dissipated, clever, young woman-writer with a very human and unselfish heart. She is at the mercy of dissipated women friends with nothing to do but lift the receivers of their telephones by their beds, their divans and their baths, to make exasperating plans for cocktail orgies and pyjama parties. She is still more at the mercy of dissipated young men without backbone, emasculated, sickly, fever-browed, perpetually on the look-out for three-week affairs without responsibilities.

Elinor has had a great many of these affairs; mostly undertaken out of kindness of heart—because someone has been let down by someone else, or because she herself is lonely. She never means them to have any effect on her one way or another; but as a matter of fact, as she is not hard, the break-off invariably hurts or humiliates her. Preoccupation with sex and late hours have exhausted her. The happiness of a young couple is spoilt by her affair with a married man who had insisted on it.

Her conclusion is that only 'the hard' come through

love affairs well. Liars succeed: and they must lie, and lie, and lie all round. 'I loathe all this promiscuous bedding that goes on. Not for itself, but for all the misery it brings, all the hatred, and the hurting and the lying, and all the other things it brings crashing down with it. But if you're going to do it, the least you can do is to stand by it. You've no right to go in for that kind of thing if you can't see it through.'

Thus Elinor addresses the young husband who had confessed his affair to his wife. He has not acquired 'hardness'. He is acutely unhappy in the predicament which he has brought upon himself.

Mr. van Druten can describe modern second-rate studio, theatrical, and literary life—to the life. His own style reminds one of a fast trotter with a long road in front of him, going smartly all the time. It is admirably suited to his subject. But the jazz jargon and slang of his characters seem to have encouraged an undue tendency in himself to find pidgin-English more expressive. We prophesy that in 1931 if we open a book and find a 'drunk' going on in a cubist flat, and the brightness of the first far dawn coming in through the parted jazz curtains to the 'squizz' of the soda syphon, we shall put down that book. Mr. van Druten has composed the *vale* of the cocktail!

'He is admirably suited to the occasion', as the saying is. He has an excellent gift for thoroughly presenting a case, and for 'summing up.' Already we are calling 'Back to Marsala!' if not quite 'Back to tea!' As a matter of fact, it is the cry 'Back to tea' which is heard at the close of A Woman on her Way. The hero 'looked in at the window of a house they were passing. . . Within was a fire, and solid furniture and people having tea.' And then he proposes to Elinor. 'I'm not much of a catch as a

husband, I know. A drunk and an idler. . . . 'They have been through much, separately, but on the same lines. They are both battered.

'But say, dear, there's another thing.'

'We are not in love with each other—like that,

'If someone else comes along—for you?'

'I don't think so,' she said. 'And you?'

'I want happiness so much more,' he said.

'And I.'

Apples Be Ripe, by Llewelyn Powys. (Longmans. 7s. 6d.) When Christopher Holbech went up to Cambridge, he was beginning to have views on life. 'Life was a series of sensations devoid of ulterior significance and should never be regarded as anything else. All troubles came . . . from not frankly acknowledging the simple fact that there was no immortality.' He thought about it a great deal. In spite of this he became popular in the college. 'He was able with eager high spirits to share in the interests of his friends, which were mainly concerned with cricket, football, and rowing . . . Often they would have drinkingbouts, and Chris . . . would presently feel his way out on to the grass and be sick.' Then he met Raymond Tytheridge. 'This young man was beautiful.' He was also unprejudiced. They went for a walk one day, and found a number of harebells. 'Raymond looked at the harebells. "When I see something beautiful I want to ravish it," he said, and in a moment he had stretched himself out upon the flowers.' This remark 'troubled' Chris. The same evening, in his friend's company, 'he had his first experience with a woman.' 'The question may very well be asked why it was that Chris, when he left the University, elected to become a schoolmaster.' He did, however. It was an astonishing school. The children 'ate their slices of beef with peas and potatoes and were never so much as aware that they were carnivorous'. Chris was attracted by Adela, the head master's niece, and tried seducing her; but this failed, and so, being 'an incorrigible romantic', he began to think he would have to marry her after all. On the honeymoon she turned out to be conventional and cold. They came across Raymond, in lodgings with a girl. Diana was a fanatical exponent of free love. She took Adela to see her room, and pointing out the bed remarked: 'This is the bed we sleep in'. Adela disapproved of her, and in the end Chris decided to leave his wife and become a farm labourer. Cold, hunger and women, he decided—'these were matters worthy of a man's attention. Anything beyond that betrayed the spirit'. He gave his attention to two women in particular; making love to the second in a haystack just after falling into the river. he unfortunately caught a chill, and expired in a few days, beloved by all and dismally lamented.

The psychology involved is simple. All who practise or countenance free love have the most delicious characters, and hearts of gold, while all the others are cruel and intensely stupid, and never entertain a wholesome thought. Chris is a hero, and in fact a martyr: touching, in the last chapter, the pinnacle of charm and pathos, he is even referred to as a boy.

Faber, by Jacob Wassermann. (Allen & Unwin. 7s. 6d.) Faber had been taken prisoner in the first month of the war: utterly cut off, therefore, from his native town and his young wife Martina. He and Martina had grown up together; they had 'formed a complete unit ever since they met', and 'could only be considered as one'. Every-

one had felt and acknowledged this. But through the 'lost years' of his imprisonment he had been tortured, not only by an almost intolerable desire for his wife, but by the conviction that she was slipping away from him. Her letters told of an elderly and rather mysterious woman, known as the Princess, who was running a vast colony of destitute children; Martina had joined her; she now wrote almost exclusively of the Princess and of her work for the Children's City. Faber could not reconcile this with his idea of Martina; it was clear to him that she had changed, that she had been changed; that she no longer needed him; he was left out; she had been stolen from him, in fact, by the Princess. So he returned home in dread, and his terrors were at once confirmed. Martina had changed to him: 'their bodies no longer responded', neither did their minds. And it was plain that Martina, too, had been afraid, and that she, too, was disappointed; but he could not think why. He felt himself lost, for Martina, though a being of singular innocence and charm, was in fact a dumb creature—profoundly inarticulate. In the old days they had understood each other without words, and now, when words were necessary, she could not utter them. At last the nightmarish, enchanted silence was broken for him by another woman. Faith, who had come to live with Martina while he was away. She told him that Martina was not working, as he had supposed, out of humanity. 'No trace of that. Martina wanted a profession.' Faber was astounded. Till he had left her, Faith went on, she had been simply 'a loving wife; a beloved woman'. His absence left her nothing to fill up her day. She had to do something; not merely her situation, but her self-respect suddenly demanded it. 'She simply did not find it fitting to exist

wholly by virtue of one man's benevolence.' So she joined the Princess, and worked extremely hard; that was what she wanted. But at the same time she began to dread her husband's return. She could not explain herself, she was a dumb soul, she could only hope he would understand her without an explanation. And she feared that he would not understand, that there would be no rediscovery of one another: 'Merely the seizure, merely the claim. merely the demand, as if nothing had happened to her'. And this, in fact, had been the case. Such was Faith's explanation; Faber was convinced, but not comforted. He could not rise to the situation, for he was the victim, with those lost years behind him preying on his soul; he was the one craving to be reassured. At last, through the mild intervention of the Princess, he pulled himself together. He could not live without Martina; the only way to win her back was to 'remove his hand from her', to set her free, and leave it to time to reunite them in a new harmony.

The persons in the book have a poetic charm: the enchanting, though too puzzling Martina; Christopher, her little boy; Faith, a character of masculine beauty, dignified plain-dealing, strong as a tower in her honesty and self-respect. The scenes, too, are poetic, with a curious subdued quality; the rhythm is subdued. And through it all runs a morality, sane, beautiful, rather austere, founded on self-respect; on complete freedom from the tyranny of another, and a noble subjection to principles. The book flows on in a faint yet steady music; one has to listen attentively in order to follow it at all. That is its fault; there is too much straining of the ear. Even a close listener will occasionally miss a note. But it is a rare and delicate experience.

Rambling Kid, by Charles Ashleigh. (Faber & Faber. 7s. 6d. net.) Rambling Kid describes the adventures of Joe Crane, who, when a child, emigrates from a London slum to South Dakota. He knocks about a great deal of the United States, learns the craft of hoboing, becomes a revolutionary, and has a love affair. He settles down for awhile in San Francisco and becomes mixed up with the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World). He is jailed for a theft committed by his friend, and on being released just escapes being re-arrested for political reasons. He is skilfully spirited away by his fellow revolutionaries, and the book ends with him on board a ship bound for Russia, to take a part in revolutionary organization there. Things are at last really beginning to happen to him: he looks east full of idealistic hope for adventure.

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Rambling Kid has no real literary value; but it is thoroughly enjoyable and interesting. The author (English by birth) expresses a contemporary American attitude that romantic toughness which sends rather consciously unsentimental youths to seek for unglamorous, undisillusioning adventure. Much of contemporary American fiction is the expression of this romantic toughness. It generally deals with the less pleasing aspects of national adolescence. And this idealistic, adventurous, transient low-living is representative of the American attitude to life. It has not yet been perfectly expressed in literature. It is implicit in some of Cummings's work, in some of Dos Passos, in most of Hemingway. It is interesting to trace in it, when it is unconsciously expressed in fiction, the beginning and development of a national feeling. This sounds a little remote from the simple passions, gropings and adventures of Mr. Ashleigh's hero, but Rambling Kid is an expression of this spirit. A better writer than Mr. Ashleigh trying to do this might fail. The conscious representation of such a subject has not yet been done successfully: Dos Passos in the 42nd Parallel has not succeeded.

The dialogue is excellent, and the treatment of the hero's revolutionary convictions and sentiments admirable. His enthusiasms are made understandable and convincing, and the reader's sympathies are enlisted for them without appealing to his acquiescence, but through his personal sympathies with the hero. The book is written in a definitely individual manner; it is not a particularly commendable manner, but is entirely adequate. One is interested and reads fast, and that, I imagine, is what the writer would wish.

LIFE AND LETTERS

G. M. TREVELYAN

### CARLYLE AS AN HISTORIAN

As an historian Carlyle has immense faults both of omission and commission. But his faults are just those which modern historians are in least danger of imitating, and his merits are precisely those in which modern history is deficient.

Carlyle held, rightly or wrongly, a much higher estimate of history than other historians, or other men of letters. To his thinking, fiction was an inferior, that is a less valuable, part of letters than history, because, as he believed, truth about actual facts was not only more instructive but more poetical than fiction. To him 'men's History and man's History' are 'a perpetual evangel', and the events of the past, if truly recorded, are the message of God to man. Perhaps after all he was right; perhaps that is so. Yet it is prudent to admit that God's handwriting in history is often most illegible, and that His message is more manifold and more complex than even Carlyle saw, than any one of us is able to see. Each of us sees a glimpse, deciphers a sentence or two in that great Book of Life, or Bible, which history is, or would be if it ever came to be rightly written. Yet I wish that every modern student would begin with something of the spirit of Carlyle's awestruck approach to history, his deep reverence for the record of the past of the human

race, as being the true poetry, the true religion.

Cause and effect! Of course history is a record of cause and effect, of evolution, of the quasi-miraculous growth of civilization out of barbarism, of each new form of life and thought emerging out of that which went before-the moving picture of mankind ever on the march from the unknown origin to the unknown fate: 'on the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped in: the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van'-on barrows of the downs and moors, and in gravel of cave-floor and river-drift

But history is more even than a record of evolution. It is, or should be, also the record of the heroic things that men have thought and done in their hard, often baffled, never abandoned struggle upward out of darkness to light. It is the history of the best men and of the best in ordinary men, dreadfully set off against the background of the worst and the most commonplace which so often swallows up the best, but never wholly swallows it.

Why, then, if history is all this, does it hold a place so much inferior not only to poetry but even to novels in the estimation, not only of the multitude, but also of the more knowledgeable literary world? There is at least one answer that is in itself sufficient. The men of genius have preferred to write poetry, novels and belles lettres instead of history. Carlyle and one or two more are the sole exceptions; let us be glad of them instead of trying to drum them out of the historical army by proclamation, as was the fashion among professional historians a generation ago. We shall not get too many men of the calibre of Carlyle to write history, so there is no need to discourage them. The notice-board, 'No Man of Literary Genius Need Apply', was equally foolish and unnecessary. It has now been taken down, but the men of literary genius have not rushed in.

But if Dry-as-Dust was at one time hard on Carlyle, it must be admitted that he had provocation. Carlyle, while he used the work of Dry-as-Dust, groaned aloud over him and abused him all the while, which was hardly fair, and naturally set up bad feeling. Read, for instance, what Carlyle writes at the end of the first chapter of Frederick:

'It is frightful to see the Gelehrte Dummkopf (what we here may translate *Dry-as-Dust*) doing the function of History, and the Shakespeare and the Goethe neglecting it. Interpreting events, interpreting the universally visible, entirely *indubitable* Revelation of the Author of this Universe: how can Dry-as-Dust interpret such things, the dark chaotic dullard, who knows the meaning of nothing cosmic or noble, nor ever will know? . . . They that could have taught better were engaged in fiddling; for which there are good wages going.'

This passage, to my mind, contains a core of important truth in a setting of error, ill-temper and injustice. Dry-as-Dust has often a dumb feeling for the poetry and nobility of the facts of the past, which leads him to devote his life to historical learning, instead of going elsewhere for the 'good wages' of 'fiddling' or other more highly rewarded pursuits. Dry-as-Dust, if he had no emotional feeling for his subject, deep and silent in his heart, would not devote his life to it. He loves to edit the 'chronicles of wasted time', in order to catch a glimpse of the real life of 'ladies dead and lovely knights', even if it were only by discovering the nature of the lovely knight's fees.

The passage which I have quoted from Carlyle is, perhaps, equally hard on the men of genius, whom it accuses of having chosen to 'fiddle' instead of to write history. The fact is that Shakespeare and Scott each did far more for history by writing historical plays and romances than if Shakespeare had written the Chronicle of the Kings of England, and Scott (heaven save us!) had written a series of histories like his Life of Napoleon. Both Shakespeare the playwriter and Scott the novelist interpreted God's wavs with man as revealed in history no less effectively than Carlyle himself. The popular interest in history owes more to Shakespeare and to Scott than to any two other men. In our own times Thomas Hardy with his Dynasts and Bernard Shaw with his St. Joan have also helped history in the best way each could. A history of the world by Mr. Shaw might be as wayward as one of his own Prefaces; but St. Joan is a work of art and an important piece of historical interpretation. Hardy's Dynasts, if we compare it with Shakespeare's historical plays, lacks Shakespeare's unique genius and poetry, but is nearer to the actual truth of history, because Hardy lived in a more historically-minded age.

And yet we may be very thankful that among the men of literary genius Carlyle for one did devote himself to the writing of history in the strict sense of the word. For his history books have more permanent value than his pamphlets and his philosophical and political works—Sartor excepted. Take, for instance, Past and Present. In that little volume how much more valuable, at least for our purposes to-day, is his treatment of the past than his treatment of the present! The story of St. Edmondsbury Monastery loses singularly little in the light of the greater knowledge we have to-day acquired of the Middle Ages.

But the rest of the book, a pamphlet on the social distress of the hungry 'forties, about Sir Jabesh Windbag and the Captains of Industry and so forth, was written for his age, not for ours. In its day it had great and beneficent effect; it served its generation. His Abbot Samson, on the other hand, is for all time. Or again, compare the permanent value of his *Cromwell* to that of his *Latter Day Pamphlets*. Carlyle found his true métier as an historian.

But before I begin to discuss his historical works *seriatim*, I should like first to go back to his theory of history, and examine more fully his reasons for preferring history over fiction, and even over poetry, on the ground that history is, ideally at least, the highest form of literature.

'Consider,' he writes, 'all that lies in that one word Past! What a pathetic, sacred, in every sense poetic meaning is implied in it; a meaning growing ever the clearer, the farther we recede in Time—the more of that same Past we have to look through! On which ground indeed must Sauerteig have built, not without plausibility, in that strange thesis of his: that History, after all, is the true poetry; that Reality if rightly interpreted is grander than Fiction; nay that even in the right interpretation of Reality and History does genuine Poetry lie.'

This doctrine of 'Sauerteig's'—that is of Carlyle himself in one of his moods—expresses his attitude to history as potentially the highest of all the arts. History, if it could find its Shakespeare, would be even more moving than poetry and drama, because of the added emotion aroused in the contemplation of events that we believe to have really occurred, of persons whom we believe to have really existed. Shakespeare's record of

Hamlet has more value than any record of Cromwell that we are like to have, because Shakespeare wrote it; but if we believed Shakespeare's Hamlet to have really existed, our interest would be greater still. Indeed, to enhance our pleasure, there are moments when we half pretend to ourselves that Hamlet was a real person. Bradley's noble study of Shakespeare's Tragedies is based on such a pretence. Bradley leads us on to think of Hamlet as having a continuous life of his own between the scenes, and in the years before the play begins, the years when he rode on Yorick's back and studied at Wittenberg, although actually we know that there was 'no such matter'.

Our interest in Cromwell derives from our belief that once there actually was such a man in England. The poetry of history lies in its being true. But Shakespeare's imagination refused to be bound in the trammels of actual fact, so he refused to be an historian. History, therefore, has not yet got its Shakespeare, and therefore Clio is still only in the second line of the Muses. But at least it has had its Carlyle, and that is something.

In his Essay on Boswell's Johnson, Carlyle illustrates very fully his emotional feeling towards history and the past. History, he says in effect, has a two-fold emotional advantage over fiction: first, it is true, it really happened. These dear dead men and women were once alive and actual as we are now for our brief day. Secondly, the event described is in the Past, and therefore has about it a special romance or pathos, to Carlyle at least and to most, I suppose, of those who, like myself, are specially devoted to history.

'Thus,' he writes, 'for Boswell's Life of Johnson has Time done, is Time still doing, what no ornament of

Art or Artifice could have done for it. Rough Samuel and sleek wheedling James were and are not. Their Life and whole personal Environment has melted into air. The Mitre Tayern still stands in Fleet Street: but where now is its scot-and-lot paying, beef-and-ale loving, cocked-hatted, pot-bellied Landlord; its rosyfaced, assiduous Landlady, with all her shining brasspans, waxed tables, well-filled larder-shelves; her cooks and bootjacks, and errand-boys, and watery-mouthed hangers-on? Gone! Gone! The becking Waiter who, with wreathed smiles, was wont to spread for Samuel and Bozzy their supper of the gods has long since pocketed his last sixpence; and vanished, sixpences and all, like a ghost at cock-crowing. The Bottles they drank out of are all broken, the Chairs they sat on all rotted and burnt; the very Knives and Forks they ate with have rusted to the heart, and become brown, oxide of iron, and mingled with the indiscriminate clay. All, all has vanished; in very deed and truth, like that baseless fabric of Prospero's air-vision. Of the Mitre Tavern nothing but the bare walls remain there: of London, of England, of the World, nothing but the bare walls remain; and these also decaying (were they of adamant), only slower. The mysterious River of Existence rushes on: a new Billow thereof has arrived, and lashes wildly as ever round the old embankments; but the former Billow, with its loud, mad eddyings, where is it? Where? Now this Book of Boswell's, this is precisely a revocation of the edict of Destiny; so that Time shall not utterly, not so soon by several centuries, have dominion over us. A little row of Naphtha-lamps, with its line of Naphthalight, burns clear and holy through the dead Night of the Past: they who are gone are still here; though

hidden they are revealed, though dead they yet speak. There it shines, that little miraculously lamplit Pathway; shedding its feebler and feebler twilight into the boundless dark Oblivion—for all that our Johnson touched has become illuminated for us: on which miraculous little Pathway we can still travel, and see wonders.

'Which of us but remembers, as one of the sunny spots in his existence, the day when he opened these airy volumes, fascinating him by a true natural magic! It was as if the curtains of the past were drawn aside, and we looked mysteriously into a kindred country, where dwelt our Fathers; inexpressibly dear to us, but which had seemed forever hidden from our eyes. For the dead Night had engulfed it; all was gone, vanished as if it had not been. Nevertheless, wondrously given back to us, there once more it lay; all bright, lucid, blooming; a little island of Creation amid the circumambient Void. There it still lies; like a thing stationary, imperishable, over which changeful Time were now accumulating itself in vain, and could not, any longer, harm it, or hide it.'

Or again, at the end of the same volume of Essays he thus expresses the same emotional attitude to the Past from a larger field of vision:

'Consider History with the beginnings of it stretching dimly into the remote Time; emerging darkly out of the mysterious Eternity; the ends of it enveloping us at this hour, whereof we at this hour, both as actors and relators, form part. In essence and significance it has been called the true Epic Poem and universal Divine Scripture, whose "plenary inspiration" no man, out of Bedlam, or in it, shall bring in question.'

In Past and Present the account of Abbot Samson and the monastery of St. Edmondsbury is filled from beginning to end with this same sense of the mystery and poetry of the past, once as actual as the present, now vanished like a dream. And in particular Carlyle writes poetical dithyrambs on the romance of the historical document, which I would recommend to the notice of historical students. Monk Jocelin's chronicle is the document in question, sole base of Carlyle's biography of Abbot Samson.

'It must be owned, the good Jocelin, spite of his beautiful child-like character, is but an altogether imperfect "mirror" of these old-world things! The good man, he looks on us so clear and cheery and in his neighbourly soft-smiling eyes we see so well our own shadow, we have a longing always to cross-question him, to force from him an explanation of much. But no; Jocelin, though he talks with such clear familiarity, like a next-door neighbour, will not answer any question; that is the peculiarity of him, dead these six hundred and fifty years, and quite deaf to us, though still so audible! The good man, he cannot help it, nor can we.'

At last Jocelin's historical document comes to a sudden end, and with it our knowledge of the remaining course of Abbot Samson's heroic life. 'The rest is silence.' This is how Carlyle describes the matter:

'Magnanimous Samson, his life is but a labour and a journey; a bustling and a justling, till the still Night come. He is sent for again, over sea, to advise King Richard touching certain Peers of England, who had taken the Cross, but never followed it to Palestine;

whom the Pope is enquiring after. The magnanimous Abbot makes preparation for departure; departs, and -And Jocelin's Boswellian Narrative, suddenly shornthrough by the scissors of Destiny, ends. There are no words more; but a black line, and leaves of blank paper. Irremediable: the miraculous hand, that held all this theatric-machinery, suddenly quits hold; impenetrable Time-Curtains rush down; in the mind's eye all is again dark, void; with loud dinning in the mind's ear, our real-phantasmagory of St. Edmundsbury plunges into the bosom of the Twelfth Century again, and all is over. Monks, Abbot, Hero-worship, Government, Obedience, Cœur-de-Lion and St. Edmund's Shrine, vanish like Mirza's Vision; and there is nothing left but a mutilated black Ruin amid green botanic expanses, and oxen, sheep and dilettanti pasturing in their places.'

Such was Carlyle's intense emotional feeling for the romance of history, the poetry of facts about the past. His creed was that the poetry of history consisted in its being true, that the fact was poetic, because it was a fact and not a fiction about the past. This feeling inspired at once the poetry and the realism of his historical narrative, whether in the French Revolution, in Cromwell, or in Frederick. It made him worship the fact, the detail, the ascertainable truth, as the vehicle of poetry. Having been at pains to discover the fact, he was equally at pains to present it to the reader at once realistically and poetically. History is often written in a manner that is neither realistic nor poetical, and very seldom in a way that is both at once. That, I conceive, was Carlyle's great merit as an historian; he combines the poetry and the realism of history, so that they cannot be distinguished

one from another. His art in graphic, thumbnail sketches of men and of events is the greatest quality in all his powers as a writer; it keeps him as one of the immortals, even when fashion runs strongest against his doctrines and ways of thought. And this poetic realism in portraiture and scene-painting is a quality specially suited to history.

But he had great faults as an historian. He so often thought that there was only one side to a question. This habit of mind grew on him as he grew older, and as his doctrine of hero-worship more and more dominated his interpretation of life. It is least in evidence—indeed it is not in evidence at all—in *The French Revolution*, which was his earliest historical work, and was, moreover, most luckily, a story without a hero. The hero-worship and one-sidedness begins to be visible in his next historical works, the lectures on *Heroes* and *Past and Present*. To Carlyle nothing that Abbot Samson does can be wrong, no quarrel he espouses can have two sides. His next work, *Cromwell*, is the turning-point. There the theory comes out full-blown, and in *Frederick* it governs everything.

Carlyle's hero-worship was connected with a strongly felt emotional attitude to the universe, which he had not really thought out intellectually, namely, his belief that evil or sham always come to grief in the end, and that right is always ultimately might and destined to triumph. But in reality the connection between right and might is occasional only. It is not a universal law, traceable in all history. By Carlyle's own standards of judgement it can be shown that bad sometimes triumphs permanently over good, that 'shams' often outlast 'realities'. If, as Carlyle thought, the French ancien régime perished because it was a 'sham', French Protestantism had perished even sooner,

and Carlyle would not have called that a 'sham'. Sometimes, indeed, Carlyle recognizes that the universe does not in fact move by the laws he had laid down for it, any more than by the Thirty-Nine Articles which he despised so much. The spleen of his later years was due, not only to indigestion, but to perpetually recurring doubt whether in fact God was asserting Himself in the world's affairs. But very often Carlyle will try to make his theory work in hell's despite, by distorting or overlooking some of the

most important happenings of history.

I will take one small example, at random, out of Past and Present. In describing the martyrdom of St. Edmund by the Danes he very naturally takes the side of St. Edmund. But because he takes that side, he therefore has not only no good word to say for the Danes, whom he treats as mere harmful plunderers, but he travesties the facts of history by saying that 'the earth was cleared of them'. But in fact the earth was not cleared of them. They conquered and settled East Anglia and St. Edmund's own county, turning it into the Dane Law. English earth has not, I am glad to say, been cleared of them to this day. It has, indeed, been cleared of their heathenism and of their plundering habits, and St. Edmund's Christianity and love of order have triumphed. But the Danes are with us still: they are flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone. Moreover, the Danes had something of value to give to the crass Saxon England of that time-valour, energy, independence of spirit, and seafaring and commercial habits. These things Carlyle might so easily have perceived. Indeed, one feels certain that if, instead of modernizing a monastic chronicle, he had happened to be writing, as he so easily might, a history of the Norse peoples taken from the Eddas and Sagas, in the spirit of his lecture on Odin, he would with peculiar gusto have described the energies and brave adventurous sea-farings and land-farings of the Danes, come as God's instruments to shake the purblind, dormant Saxon kingdoms once more into active life. Carlyle is, in fact, so often the most partial, the most partisan of historians, sometimes on principle, as in the case of Cromwell, sometimes, as in this case, according to a whim or circumstance of the moment.

Yet not always. Nothing, for instance, could be more impartial and more profound than his remarks on the struggle between Church and State in the time of Anselm and of Becket in the chapter on Aristocracies, near the end of Past and Present, pp. 212-13 of the common edition. And above all we have the unalloyed humanity, sympathy and impartiality of his French Revolution. In that great work, Carlyle's sympathies are freely divided up among all the parties and actors, judging each man by his merits as a human being and not otherwise. 'Cavaignac is angry with me,' he writes, 'for my treatment of the seagreen man and impartialité generally. I take no side in the matter. How very singular!' When he thus allows himself to be a spectator and not himself a combatant, how deep then is his penetration into the ways of men. I still prefer his book on the French Revolution to any other I have read.

I am well aware of all that it is not. It gives no account of the social causes of the French Revolution, no analysis of the ancien régime. Writing in 1835, he had not the help, so familiar to us, of de Tocqueville or of Taine, or of any of the later students of the old form of French life. His book is a narrative of the events of the Revolution, not of its causes. Moreover, the narrative, written within forty-five years of the events themselves, is based on very few,

and in many cases not very accurate, authorities. His details are, therefore, frequently wrong. Oscar Browning corrected him over the Flight to Varennes. Yet, with all these disadvantages, I know of no other book in French or English which conveys to me so living a picture of the moods of French men and women in those years when popular moods were the guide and impulse of events, because all institutions, authorities and customs had been for awhile abolished. Carlyle alone, of those historians of the Revolution which I have read, gives the human psychology of the mob its proper place in the story of 1789-95. After the 'whiff of grape-shot' in Vendémiaire, when France again got a government that could disregard the wishes of the Sections of Paris, the psychology of the mob falls back into its usual limited place in human affairs once more. But between 1789 and 1795 the variable sentiments of French men and women at large, and of the mob of Paris in particular, decided one crisis after another. How this happened seems to me more clearly written in Carlyle than in Acton, Aulard, Lenostre or any other of the best writers on the Revolution, who with more knowledge of documents had less sympathetic insight into the common human heart than the Carlyle of 1835. The Carlyle of later years allowed his theories and his dyspepsia largely to overcloud the shrewd, broad human sympathies and perceptions that dictated his French Revolution. The fact that he is neither for nor against the Revolution, and that he found no 'hero' in it to worship, helped the soundness of his judgement in this book. I do not think that all our later learning has enabled us to produce any better analysis of the psychological causes of the Terror than this of Carlyle. Here is Carlyle's explanation of it-and I know none better:

'Imagine, O Reader, that the Millennium were struggling on the threshold, and yet not so much as groceries could be had—owing to Traitors. With what impetus would a man strike Traitors in that case! Ah, thou canst not imagine it; thou hast thy groceries safe in the shops, and little or no hope of a Millennium coming!'

As to Carlyle's attitude to the whole Revolution, it is, as I say, no partisan attitude, but something much deeper than that. I know of nothing ever said about the Revolution better than this:

'The Fireship is old France, the old French Form of Life; her crew a generation of men. Wild are their cries and their ragings there, like spirits tormented in that flame. But, on the whole, are they not gone, O Reader? Their Fireship and they, frightening the world, have sailed away; its flames and its thunders quite away, into the Deep of Time. One thing therefore History will do, pity them all; for it went hard with them all.'

If history contained more writing like that, Clio would not be the Cinderella of the Muses, uncertain at times whether she be indeed a Muse or only a kitchen-maid.

Again, Carlyle's insight into the character of particular actors (none of them fortunately judged by him to be 'heroes') is so profound, so humorous, and touched in with strokes of inimitable art. Take this portrait of Sieyes, which I have heard Sieyes' English biographer praise—(II. 5). The scene is the National Assembly, autumn of 1793, engaged on making the Constitution:

'With ineffable serenity sniffs great Sieyes, aloft, alone; his Constitution ye may babble over, ye may

mar, but can by no possibility mend: is not Polity a science he has exhausted?'

Or this scene of an interview between Danton and Robespierre early in 1794:

'One conceives easily the deep mutual incompatibility that divided these two: with what terror of feminine hatred the poor sea-green Formula looked at the monstrous colossal Reality, and grew greener to behold him;—the Reality, again, struggling to think no ill of a chief-product of the Revolution; yet feeling that such chief-product was little other than a chief-wind-bag, blown large by popular air.'

Indeed, one great quality requisite for the proper treatment of history Carlyle has got in a superlative degree—humour. Many of us see the humour of events in history, not least in many episodes of the French Revolution, but we find it hard to give it verbal or literary expression. The humorous Englishman, smiling silently to himself over his pipe, can so seldom express in words the fun within him. But take Carlyle's account of Anacharsis Clootz' introduction of the 'Deputation from the genre Humain' to the much flattered Assembly, which granted the world's representatives the 'honneur de la séance'—(II. id.):

'A long-flowing Turk, for rejoinder, bows with Eastern solemnity, and utters articulate sounds; but owing to his imperfect knowledge of the French dialect, his words are like spilt water, the thought he had in him remains conjectural to this day.'

Or, in the rising of Prairial, when the Sections for the last time burst in on the Legislature—(III. 261):

'One man we discern bawling "for the space of an hour at all intervals", "Je demande l'arrestation des coquins et des lâches". Really one of the most comprehensive Petitions ever put up; which, indeed, to this hour, includes all that you can reasonably ask Constitution of the Year One. I also demand arrestment of the Knaves and Dastards, and nothing more whatever.'

Cromwell, completed in 1845, appeared almost ten years after The French Revolution. Though both are written in Carlylese, there is little else in common between the two books in historical method. The earlier work was a popular presentment of a great theme, based indeed on the study of first-hand authorities of a sort, but on first-hand authorities too few and too inadequate to give to his work any value as a safe reference book for details. Cromwell, on the other hand, was the first serious study of Oliver's letters and speeches, and the result was a permanent addition to historical knowledge on a subject of the very first historical consequence, namely, the character of Cromwell, and to a less extent the character of the motives of the Puritan Revolution. Heretofore the actions of the Long Parliament and of the Roundhead Party, in and after the Civil War, had been interpreted on its political and constitutional side, with little reference to the religious issues, because those had ceased to interest the most educated men of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Carlyle, from the documents, sympathetically resuscitated the real religious motives, long buried under the dust of centuries. So, too, Cromwell had been regarded as a hypocrite. The Tories had no word too bad for him; the Whigs dared not wholeheartedly defend a regicide, and moreover were puzzled by his religious

zeal. The Dissenters, who might have understood him, at least in part, had been thoughtfully excluded by the Legislature from the higher education of the country. And so no historian had ever studied Cromwell with an eye for his real motives. Carlyle's book changed this, once and for all. Henceforth, as Froude said, Cromwell 'may be loved or he may be hated, as he was loved and hated in his own time; but we shall love or hate the man himself, not a shadow or a caricature of a man.'

This great and permanent change in the opinion both of historical scholars and of the man in the street was effected by Carlyle because he consented on this occasion to harness his Pegasus to the work of serious historical research. He became, in fact, his own Dryas-Dust. Pegasus remains Pegasus and flies, but this time he drags a solid cart through the empyrean. I would not say that Cromwell is either a greater or a less achievement than the French Revolution. Only it is a totally different one. It is different in two respects. First, it is based on far more solid research; it even sacrifices its literary form and much even of its literary success to reproducing the letters and speeches in extenso. Secondly, though it taught the world much that was new and of supreme importance about Cromwell, it had not the impartiality and large charity of the French Revolution. Carlyle's Cromwell is dominated, for evil as well as for good, by the idea of heroworship, which is totally absent in the earlier work. Everyone who opposes Cromwell is written down as fool or knave-at best as 'blockhead' like 'wooden Bulstrode'. Now, since almost everyone of note in England, except Milton and Blake, at one time or another opposed Cromwell, the result is scarcely fair to the nation as a whole. It is, in fact, not a national epic but a biography. Yet

Carlyle's idea was originally to write a National Epic of Puritan England, in the style of his French Revolution. The rough sketch of several of its chapters was posthumously published under the title of Historical Sketches—a work well worth more attention than it receives, both for its own sake and as showing by what stages he arrived at the conception of his Cromwell.

The abandonment of this idea of a national epic in purely literary form, and the substitution of a biography in a form very far from purely literary, is a turning-point in Carlyle's career as an historian. It gave him a second wind, a new source of power, as Dry-as-Dust, as researcher, thereby increasing his historical importance, somewhat at the expense of the literary pleasure given by his works. In the second place it meant the final triumph of his idea of hero-worship as the main element in his interpretation of history. Frederick, which became the task of his later years, repeats and emphasizes both these characteristics-intense application to detailed research in documents, and the subjection of historical impartiality to hero-worship. This simultaneous double change in the character of Carlyle's work is a reminder that depth of research does not necessarily increase impartiality of mind or breadth of sympathy.

If the transition stage from the French Revolution to Frederick can be seen in Cromwell, the transition from the French Revolution to Cromwell can be seen in Past and Present. In Past and Present he tasted the joys of first-hand work on an ancient document, Jocelin's Chronicle, as his sole raw material of his story. And in telling the tale of Abbot Samson he became sensitive to the pleasures of biography and to the allurements of hero-worship. He wrote Past and Present in 1842 as a parergon in the middle

of his Puritan-Cromwellian studies, and we can see the effect of his experience with Jocelin upon those studies. Almost immediately after he had published Past and Present, he threw his unfinished National Epic of Puritanism into the back of a drawer and commenced to edit Cromwell's Letters and Speeches. One can, therefore, hardly doubt that his intellectual experience with Jocelin's Chronicle and Abbot Samson affected his decision in favour of the biographic form, and the great place given to documents in the new work.

I cannot, I think, end better than by quoting his apostrophe to Oliver Cromwell, with which his post-humously-published *Historical Sketches* close. In it he explains clearly enough why he abandoned his general history of Puritan and Cavalier England for a biography of one man:

'I confess I have an interest in this Mr. Cromwell; and, indeed, if truth must be said, in him alone. The rest are historical, dead to me; but he is epic, still living. Hail to thee, thou strong one; hail across the long-drawn funeral aisle and night of Time! Two dead centuries, with all they have borne and buried, part us; and it is far to speak together; how diverse are our Centuries, most diverse, yet our Eternity is the same: and a kinship unites us which is much deeper than Death and Time. Hail to thee, thou strong one, for thou art ours, and I, at least, mean to call thee so.'

#### MARCUS CHEKE

# THE LOUIS QUINZE CLOCK

To the Lady Elspeth Campbell

The memory of the great storm of 1911 still lingers amongst the South Sea Islands. In that storm the Spanish ship Carola went down off the coast of Tahiti. It was supposed that there were no survivors, but in reality one soul was saved—a young sailor of the name of Pietro, who had bound himself to a piece of a spar. For two days and nights he was tossed upon the waves insensible, and at last, having been carried far from the place of the wreck, he was at dawn of the third day washed up upon a beach.

When he recovered consciousness, he became aware that he was lying upon warm sand, whilst a woman was leaning over him and forcing water between his lips. Although hardly more than a boy Pietro had passed two years trading in those seas, and had picked up a smattering of the language used by the natives of the islands.

'He is not dead,' he heard the woman saying, 'let us carry him to the hut. Go and find food for him.'

'I have no time to spare,' answered the person she addressed, who was her husband, 'it is the day of the battle.'

He appeared to be a fisherman, for he carried nets over his shoulder.

'But the battle does not take place until the evening.' answered the woman, 'there is plenty of time.'

They lifted Pietro to his feet, and bore him up the sands into the luxuriant foliage which fringed the beach. After they had traversed a narrow path for some little way they emerged on to an open space, which was carpeted with young grass. In the centre of this clearing stood a primitive hut, constructed of dried palm-leaves and plaited brushwood. They laid Pietro upon a couch of dried grasses in the sun. Then the woman prepared a meal which she made signs to him to share.

The beach upon which Pietro had been cast formed part of the eastern shore of the island of Staroa. The coast of the island consists of a series of coral lagoons where, fathoms deep in the clear water, can be seen the multicoloured fish following their shadows over the sand. The unruffled surface of the pools is never broken, save when a flight of flying fish, their fins burnished by the sun, rises from the lagoon. But beyond the reefs is visible the long white line of the Pacific breakers. The scenery of the island is of marvellous beauty. Through the branches of its palm-groves, which are hung with festoons of orchids, flit birds of the most brilliant plumage and vivid butterflies. Lying outside the lines of steamers across the Pacific the island has remained undisturbed by white colonists and has retained a simple and immemorial civilization which anthropologists consider must have been once connected with that of the Aztecs. The single range of low hills running from east to west, divides the island into two countries of equal size. The one to the north was, in the year 1911, ruled over by the Princess Tasiti, a girl who had ascended the throne some ten years earlier at the tender age of seven. The country to the south, which was that where Pietro found himself, was still known as the Empire of the Asseli, having at a remote age held claim to dominion over an archipelago long since disappeared in the sea through volcanic disturbance. It was ruled over by the Empress Lahu, who, since the death of the last

Emperor, had ensured her despotism by cruelty. It was whispered that she had had her own children put to death lest they should become her rivals. The year 1911 was the twelfth of her personal reign, and although war between the two countries in the island was not uncommon there had been lately a long period of peace. Now this peace was threatened a few weeks previously to that great storm which caused the loss of the *Carola*.

The cause of the dispute was the possession of a blue frog. The frog had been found in a pond amongst the hills, and had been carried to the court of the Princess Tasiti. But such was its rare beauty that the fame of the discovery spread, and the Empress Lahu, inordinately jealous, dispatched a deputation to claim the frog as hers, on the pretext that it had been found upon her own territory. In reality the pond in question was exactly on the border-line between the two countries, and the ministers of the Princess Tasiti refused to relinquish their possession. After weeks of negotiations, the Empress had at last published her intention of declaring war, and, according to the custom of the island, a date was chosen for a battle. The date was the very day upon which Pietro was cast upon Staroa.

Pietro learnt of these facts from the fisherman who had rescued him as they ate and drank. When the meal was over Pietro felt wonderfully revived, and as it was decided that he must report his arrival on the island to the Empress, the fisherman set off with Pietro through the network of paths that interspersed the woods.

The sky was a transparent azure, and everything that Pietro saw enchanted him with its beauty. The gaudy birds chattering through the branches above his head, the exotic flowers that brushed his face with their warm pollen, the myriad metallic-hued butterflies hovering over the grass, delighted him as they would delight a child. It seemed to him that he had found his way into Paradise, and, indeed, he rubbed his eyes more than once to make sure that he had not really perished in the jaws of the sea.

They had been walking for some hours, often passing huts similar to the one where he had first been carried, when the trees began to grow less thickly, and Pietro caught his first glimpse of the capital of the Asseli. It lay in a fold of the ground, watered by a stream, and consisted of houses built of burnt clay, and well thatched. In the centre rose a vast pillared building of stone, surrounded by gardens. This, he learnt from his guide, was the palace of the Empress. Men and women were busy at their doors stringing bows and painting shields. They gazed with curiosity at Pietro as he passed them with the rolling gait of a sailor. All the natives whom they met threw smiles of welcome to them, and the women were so very lovely that Pietro felt immensely happy. The confused memory of the wreck made life the sweeter to him.

But, high as his spirits were, they were slightly chilled as he passed through the portals of the Imperial Palace. Within, it was so dark that for some minutes he could see nothing. The air was cold and clammy as if in a cellar. He was forced to take leave of the fisherman, whom he promised to see again soon, and was led down a maze of passages and told to wait in a kind of ante-chamber whose walls were weirdly painted with brown dyes. Then he was ushered into a lofty hall.

At the end of this hall, surrounded by courtiers and seated on the back seat of a crazy old motor car, was enthroned the ugliest old woman whom Pietro had ever seen. She was wearing a seaweed wig surmounted by a plume of fishbones. Her wrinkled face was smeared with paint. Against one of the mudguards of the car, which must have been built in the 'nineties, leaned a large shield and a spear. The woman's appearance was so hideous that Pietro instinctively crossed himself. He was sure that she had the evil eye.

The woman, whom, from the deference paid to her, he presumed to be the Empress Lahu, eyed him for a few seconds in silence, and then exchanged words with one of her counsellors.

Then, 'You are our prisoner,' she said, addressing Pietro.

Pietro said nothing. He could think of nothing at the moment to say.

'Can you fight?' asked the Empress.

'Of course,' answered Pietro.

'You shall take part in the battle,' she said. 'You shall be given weapons. My men are to muster at midday.'

'All right. Where do we muster?' he asked.

'On the field of battle, of course,' said the Empress, still grinning at him under her seaweed wig.

Pietro was now permitted to retire. It was only natural that he should have been somewhat mystified, being unacquainted with the customs of Staroa. When a battle is to take place on the island, the two rival armies face each other in two long single lines, fifty yards apart. The event is an excuse for wearing the most fantastic costumes.

The place chosen for the contest was a sandy clearing at the foot of the hills, and here an immense throng had collected when Pietro and the fisherman arrived upon the scene. Women crowded the slopes above the natural arena, and were prepared to encourage the combatants.

Pietro, who was still wearing a simple pair of wide-cut sailor trousers and a short blue jacket with brass buttons, accepted a bow and a helmet.

The Empress Lahu arrived, pushed along the ground in her motor-car, to the accompaniment of tom-toms and cymbals. Pietro felt curious as to whether the opposing army would be led by the Princess Tasiti in person. Her beauty was said to be amazing. He was disappointed. The enemy were commanded by a General in a heavy but magnificent suit of sharkskin armour.

The beating of a gong resounded over the plain. The two armies lined up facing each other, and the battle began. Pietro thought that he had never seen anything so ridiculous. After an hour's solemn shooting, such was the skill with which the natives used their shields that hardly a man had fallen. To Pietro it was a matter of indifference as to which side should win and thus become possessor of the blue frog. But since he found himself on the side of the Asseli he felt a sporting wish to see that side win. He began walking down behind the line of the Asseli warriors. In the centre stood the automobile of the Empress. She was seated in the chauffeur's seat, excitedly blowing her motor-horn. Pietro noticed that the car stood upon a gentle slope, though the ground on either side was level. An idea struck him. Without a moment's hesitation he put his shoulder to the back of the car and sent it rolling forward.

The effect was sensational. The traditional military tactics of centuries were broken. To cut a long story short, a positively overwhelming victory was won for the Empress Lahu, and the blue frog was borne back in triumph to her palace.

Pietro was now the hero of the hour. The islander-

placed him at the head of the procession homewards. The Empress publicly acknowledged his services by kissing him on both cheeks. He was informed that he was a free man and a hut in the Imperial Gardens was placed at his disposal. At the great feast, held in the open air on the night following the battle, he was placed on the Empress's right hand. Under a sky hung with stars of a surpassing brilliance, beneath an awning of plaited flowers, attended by women of ravishing loveliness, Pietro was spectator of the dances held in his honour. The air was balmy and heavy with the scent of fruit. The fête lasted until dawn.

And so Pietro found himself, less than twenty-four hours after he had been washed insensible on to the shores of Staroa, that which others of us, too, have ambition to become—the favourite of a sovereign and the idol of a people.

But clouds were not absent from this happy sky. It soon became clear to Pietro that the Empress Lahu was going slowly mad. Her behaviour grew daily more eccentric. She used to send for Pietro at the hour of the siesta, and insist on his climbing into the old motor-car and seating himself by her side. Then she would smother him with caresses, interrupted by peals of fiendish laughter, or weep noiselessly on his shoulder. Once she showed him her treasure-house, a room stacked with objects that at one time and another had been found, like the motor car, amongst the lagoons, having drifted from some wreck. There was half of a stained billiard table, some broken chairs, and a naval telescope (of which the Empress was extremely proud). He could not understand why the islanders consented to the Empress continuing her reign. He supposed that they were by nature lethargic. Also, the Empress was definitely possessed of some infernal power.

One day two hunchbacks were pointed out, who, he was told, had not always suffered from this infirmity, but had offended the Empress, who in revenge had punished them thus. Pietro did not believe the story, yet he could not help himself shivering slightly when he met the revolting eye of the Empress. It was an eye with a filmy grey pupil, set in a large rim of dirty white.

Then, one morning, the news spread that a new edict had been issued by the Empress Lahu. She commanded that her subjects should prostrate themselves before her, while she drove over their bodies in her motor car. The natives were dumb with amazement and horror.

Pietro was seated in front of the hut of his friend the fisherman when a messenger brought the news of the proclamation.

'The woman has gone off her head,' he said simply. The fisherman's wife was wringing her hands. 'What can be done?' she cried.

'The Empress is a lunatic,' repeated Pietro, 'and we must depose her.'

'Depose the Empress!' exclaimed the fisherman. 'Are we to kill the Empress?'

'It is not necessary that we should kill her,' answered Pietro, 'she can be exiled. Come! I am going back to the

capital. Will you follow me?"

The revolution lasted a day. The islanders followed Pietro to a man. Even the counsellors of the Empress deserted her. The palace was taken by storm, and the Empress captured, seated in her motor car, mumbling and moaning in a language nobody could understand. In the excitement of the moment it is possible that her life might have been in danger, but this was averted by Pietro. He clambered into the car and shook her, and told her to

choose where she would like henceforth to live, for she was no longer Empress of the Asseli. The Empress replied in a long speech, saying that she had long been intending abdication; it was her life's ambition to retire into complete solitude with her telescope. She therefore demanded that her motor car should be hoisted like a dovecote on the top of a high pole, and this she would have mounted on the highest hill in the island. And to her new abode the Empress in due time retired, refusing with considerable dignity to make any farewells. Having climbed into her motor thus perched in mid-air, she destroyed the rope ladder up to it, and by means of a string with a hook she used to draw up food and drink placed at the foot of the pole. She spent her days looking through her telescope, and Pietro was elected Emperor of the Asseli in her stead.

Pietro had in no way sought this honour. He had had no such ambition when he led the revolution against the Empress. He had acted thus because it seemed to him the only possible course of action, and the islanders, who themselves might have hesitated to rebel, had followed him. His popularity was now increased tenfold, and he accepted all that had befallen him as he accepted from day to day the fair weather and the foul which overtook the Carola, the adventures of outlandish harbours, and the simple welcome that awaited him on his return home, where his people lived a life of that strange dignity which the very poor share with some princes.

He took his new position gravely, and his first decision was to conclude a treaty of peace with the Princess Tasiti. He sent ambassadors, therefore, with full power to treat, and carrying a personal message from him asking whether he might have the honour of paying her a State Visit. All voices were unanimous regarding the beauty of

the Princess, though none whom Pietro met had actually seen her for some years. The treaty was successfully concluded, and he received a message from her, given to his plenipotentiaries by her ministers, thanking him for his courtesy, but saying that the Princess had of her own accord chosen a life of complete retirement, which no consideration would allow her to disturb. Pietro was perplexed. He learnt that neither his own ambassadors. nor any of the subjects of the Princess whom they had questioned had seen the Princess for a long time. He therefore, after a suitable time had elapsed, determined to send the Princess a gift, which was to be nothing other than that blue frog which had been the cause of dispute between the two countries. And this time he gave instructions that his present was to be given to the Princess by his couriers in person. Thus, he hoped, would he be able to learn something of her. But again he was disappointed. His emissaries returned with the news that they had been admitted into an immense chamber in the Princess's palace, but that the Princess herself had remained concealed behind a curtain stretched above a dais at one end of the apartment; and that the blue frog had been taken from their hands by one of the circle of aged men who formed a bodyguard to the hidden throne; that it had been taken behind the curtain to the Princess, and that after a few minutes the sage had reappeared and had delivered to them a speech of warmest thanks from their royal sovereign. She asked them to take away with them a tiny tortoise, whose shell was set with amethysts, to give to their new King as a sign of her friendship.

Pietro, as he sat in a hammock in the shade of two giant cactuses, swinging his legs in the air, remained silent when he heard this report. He knitted his brows

and his underlip quivered. He felt in a bad mood. He wondered if it were possible to fall in love with a woman whom one has never seen, and he laughed at the idea. And yet, do what he would, his thoughts began to centre obstinately round the Princess Tasiti. Could there be some mystery connected with her? Why was it that no one had seen her for so long? Could it be that the old mad Empress Lahu knew something of the matter? For Pietro learnt that the last occasion on which the Princess had been seen in public was when the two sovereigns had met under an awning on one of the hills dividing their territories, when the Empress had presented her with a small, curiously-shaped box filled with some special brown beans, a delicacy of the Empress's own table. The more Pietro pondered over the subject of the beautiful young Princess the more did his curiosity become excited. It was the one thing that marred his complete happiness on the island. He began to walk alone, turning over in his mind the mystery of the Princess Tasiti.

At last he decided on the following plan: he would travel into the neighbouring country in disguise, and he would attempt to gain access to Tasiti's palace. So he went to the hut of his friend the fisherman, who gladly lent him some native clothes, and helped him stain his limbs with berries. And when he had given orders for a report to be published that he was hunting, and had laid aside his sailor's clothes, he set out one night on foot, alone.

Towards evening on the following day he entered the capital of the Princess Tasiti.

Luck favoured him. He observed that some kind of fête was in progress, and addressing himself to a girl, without betraying his ignorance, he learned that it was the anniversary of the Princess's accession, and that the people were at that hour making their way to the Royal Palace to do homage, and to enjoy the gardens of the Princess, which were to be thrown open to the people. So he joined the crowd, easily escaping notice, and followed them through several painted gateways spanning the approach to the palace. The crowd was expected to pass through the main building, to do homage before the throne, and then to pass out into the gardens. After traversing several sets of rooms, of a far greater splendour than any in the palace of the Asseli, Pietro found himself in the body of a vast and lofty hall. At one end of it were two steps, but the dais to which they led was hidden by a heavy curtain of woven stuff, powdered with magnificent pearls. It was evidently the room of which Pietro's emissaries had spoken. On the steps of the dais stood a line of very old men, who carried wands. And when the room was filled with people a deep silence fell upon the crowd. Then a resounding blow upon a gong echoed from behind the curtain, and all dropped to their knees and touched the ground with their foreheads. This was the end of the ceremony, and everyone passed out into the gardens.

The night was devoted to music, the dance, and love. The gardens were of exquisite loveliness, with terraces shaded with fruit groves sloping down towards a tiny cove edged with sand. The air was filled with the scent of flowers and with the sound of falling water where a rivulet dashed down the terraces to the bay.

But the night could offer no pleasure to Pietro. His curiosity had been inflamed by the pantomime he had witnessed. He feared to ask questions lest his identity should be discovered. For hours he wandered restlessly

about the gardens, his eyes on the dark silhouette of the palace. Its doors had been bolted and its walls were silent. He paced the terraces aimlessly, and at last descended the steps leading to the cove below the gardens.

It must have been about two hours before dawn when Pietro found himself upon the edge of the little bay. He had walked along the glistening sand until it ended in a piece of cliff and he could go no farther. He was about to retrace his steps when his eye caught something which instantly arrested it. In the face of the cliff, fifty or sixty yards out into the water beyond the point where the sand ended, was a low sea cave, and in its mouth, exposed by the light of the moon, which was now at its full, was the prow of a native boat. It was a prow curiously carved and set with some gleaming stones. Pietro gazed at it for some moments in bewilderment. Whose boat could it be? The richness of its ornaments immediately suggested to him that it belonged to the Princess whom he was seeking. But why was it in a cave out of all touch with the beach? There could be only one solution. The cave must be somehow connected with the palace above.

To throw off his clothes, to hide them under the sand, and to slip into the water, was the work of a moment. A few strong strokes brought him to the mouth of the cave. He swam into it, feeling his way along the side of the boat, and, sure enough, his hand touched a level step. It was a flight of steps leading upwards into the cliff.

It was this part of his adventures which Pietro afterwards admitted to have been the most terrifying. In pitch darkness, groping his way up the dripping walls of the subterranean passage, he climbed seven hundred and fifty steps before the stairs ended. But they ended in a door which yielded to his touch, and when Pietro, as

cautiously as a mouse, had passed through it, he could hardly refrain from uttering a cry of joy, for he stood in the huge hall in the very centre of the palace. The staircase, as he had surmised, must have been one to permit the Princess to have access to her private boat. And in front of Pietro, not ten paces from him, hung the heavy curtain hiding the dais.

It must have been three minutes before Pietro put one foot before the other. His heartbeats were wilder than netted hawks. He assured himself that the room was empty. Then, very slowly, he crept towards the curtain.

He drew it back and stepped through.

This is what he saw. The dais was semicircular, and its walls were pierced by three open windows that looked on to the sea and the star-glittering sky. There were no doors. In the centre of the dais stood a high throne of carved ivory, richly set with rubies; and on the throne, the only sign of animation in the whole room, stood a small Louis Quinze clock. It was a clock of delicate rococo design, of enamels set in gold. And below it, between the elaborately curved legs, swung a little pendulum of diamonds and sapphires.

Pietro could hardly believe his eyes. His first emotion was one of cruel disappointment. The Princess must be elsewhere in the palace. He was about to turn away when the clock chimed. It was a chime so gentle, so sweet, and somehow so sad, that Pietro's heart felt a peculiar pang of emotion. He had not heard a clock for so long, and the music of the chime brought memories storming into his brain. He stopped still, his eye on the face of the clock. Then two curious things happened. The clock chimed again, and Pietro noticed that the diamonds on the pendulum were winking to him in an unexplainable

way. A single step brought him to the side of the throne, which was bathed in moonlight. He sank to his knees beside it and as he did so he heard the ticking of the clock grow faster, like the beating of his own heart.

Heavens! How could he have been so mad as not to have known at once. He covered her face with the kisses of his lips.

'Tasiti!' he whispered, 'will you forgive me that I have broken into the palace?'

A laughing chime answered him. He took her in his hands.

'Answer me!' he implored.

But the Princess could not speak, for though the spell of the evil Empress who had transformed her had been unable to deprive her of life, yet she could only answer by the low ripple of her chime.

'I know all now!' Pietro cried passionately. 'The Empress Lahu presented you with a casket of beans which she had bewitched with her magic. But I will save you!'

Her hands fluttered as if in bewilderment before his vehemence. The voice of her chime was broken. The diamonds gleaming in the moonlight were as liquid as tears.

'Listen,' cried Pietro, 'to-morrow I will go to the Empress Lahu who is in my power. I swear that I shall save you.' A breeze from the sea stirred his hair. In the dark silence of the gardens a bird began to sing. The sky was beginning to grow pale.

When the dawn broke, and the counsellors of the Princess came to bid her good morning, they found Pietro curled up in the throne fast asleep, and, lying on the dip of his wrist, the Louis Quinze clock.

Of course, Pietro was recognized at once, because his

swim had washed all the stain off him, and though he had discovered the secret that had been so scrupulously kept for eight years, there was not much point in being angry. So they woke Pietro and gave him something to eat, and then they related to him, at his demand, all that had befallen their unhappy country.

It appeared that ten years before, when the death of their King had placed the crown on Tasiti's head, the extraordinary beauty of their young Princess had aroused the bitter jealousy of the Empress Lahu. The Empress had tried more than once to pick a quarrel, but the danger of war had been averted by skilful diplomacy. Aware that their beloved Princess was the object of the Empress's hatred, the counsellors had done all they could to protect her from harm. Then the day had come when the two sovereigns had met to discuss a question of foreign policy. The counsellors of the Princess implored her not to accept the gift of beans, but she replied that suspicion was not the way to win confidence, and had acted contrary to their advice. She had eaten of the beans as she was returning home, and had been transformed into a clock. The Princess was an only child, and to have declared the throne vacant would have plunged the country into disorder. Nor was the throne properly vacant, for, although transformed, the Princess was not entirely dumb, and by movements of her hands she was able to make signs of her will. Her counsellors, therefore, took a solemn oath to carry on her government until the spell should break, and never to divulge the secret of the misfortune that had befallen them. Nor did the Empress Lahu, when she had thus given vent to her jealousy, desire to publish her triumph, for to have done so would have betrayed to her subjects the fact that she was a witch.

When Pietro had listened to their story and had thanked them, he took his leave of the counsellors, and he bade farewell to the Princess Tasiti, pressing his lips to her hands. Then, declining the escort offered to him, he set off alone for his own country. He made his way to that lonely hill on the east of the island which the witch had chosen for her solitary existence.

It was evening as he approached the foot of the hill. Above him, black against a rose-flushed sky, was the fantastic abode of the Empress. It looked like one of those stork-nests built of the accumulations of rubbish added by the birds year after year. As he made his way up towards the pole, Pietro could see the silhouette of the mad old Empress peering down at him fixedly through her telescope. Just as he was about to call out to her the Empress emitted a long peal of crazy laughter and began to lower a rope over the side of the motor. Pietro crossed himself with fervour. He put his hand to the rope and began to swing himself up it. He had swarmed up the rigging of the ship during a storm off the Cape of Good Hope; he had swarmed up it under a tropical sun that took the skin off his back; yet nothing had ever made him feel so uneasy as did this climb up to the witch's nest perched on the hill. As he neared the top he could see the bats clinging to the rusty old mudguards of the motor car. The air, too, was filled with their fluttering, noiseless flight, and their thin, piercing squeaks. Over the side of the car poked a thing that looked like a claw. It was the hand of the ex-Empress. Pietro, with a shudder, refused its help. With his arms he swung himself into the automobile.

The ex-Empress sat huddled on the back seat of the car, her body wrapped in rags of unspeakable foulness,

leering at him. On the driver's seat a carrion bird had made her nest, and the car stank with rotting flesh. But the view was wonderful. The whole island, reddened by the sinking sun, lay stretched out below them, bounded by a sea of violet and emerald.

The Empress leaned forward and blew on the horn of the car. In the silence of the evening the sound went echoing away to lose itself amongst the lagoons. A cloud of bats rose into the air from under the mudguards.

'Good evening,' said the Empress, 'I have been expecting you.'

'I hope you are well,' said Pietro.

The Empress motioned to him to seat himself by her side. 'Thank you,' she answered. 'Yes, I am really very comfortably installed.'

'I have come in order to speak of something very im-

portant,' said Pietro.

'I know all,' replied the old hag. 'You are aware now that I am a witch. Well, nothing occurs on the island without the bats bringing me news of it. You have come to ask me how the spell may be broken and the Princess Tasiti transformed into her own shape. You are quite right in supposing that only I know the secret of the enchantment.'

'What price do you ask?' said Pietro.

'That once every year you should spend a day and a night here with me. You shall help me to write my Memoirs. And to-night you must stay with me until the dawn breaks.'

'It's very exposed up here,' prevaricated Pietro as a

bat brushed against his face.

'We will put the hood up,' said the Empress. 'You must stay with me until the dawn breaks; and when the

sun rises out of the sea I will tell you how the spell which binds the Princess Tasiti may be broken.'

'All right, I promise,' answered Pietro after a short pause.

'Excellent!' exclaimed the Empress. 'Now we will begin my Memoirs. Here is a pencil and paper. I will dictate.'

And when the night drew to an end and the sun rose out of the sea, the Empress made Pietro lay aside the pencil, and she said: 'That the spell may be broken you must act thus: you must take the Louis Quinze clock, and you must go to one of the beaches to the east of the island, and you must fling it as far as possible out into the waters of the lagoon. But one thing is necessary: it must be on a day when the lagoons are infested with sharks.'

'Wretch,' cried Pietro, the blood rushing to his face, 'you have tricked me!'

'Do not be foolish,' said the Empress quickly. 'Do as I have told you; there is no other way by which the enchantment may be broken.'

Pietro took leave of the Empress and journeyed back to the capital of the Princess Tasiti. At the frightful news the whole Court was in despair. The truth had now spread and an immense crowd had gathered at the gates of the palace. When the witch's instructions were made known, a groan went up from the multitude.

But there was nothing to be done except to obey the witch or else for the Princess to continue the life of a Louis Quinze clock. Both alternatives were to Pietro intolerable. He was more wildly in love with the enchanted Princess than with any woman he had ever known. He spent hours toying with the clock, alone, and whispering secrets to it. At last he decided that his present life could no longer be borne. He would obey the Empress's

instructions, and would himself plunge into the water amongst the sharks to rescue her whom he loved, or to perish in the attempt.

The sun was at its meridian when Pietro, attended by the counsellors of the Princess Tasiti and the foremost of his own subjects, and followed by a vast crowd of the islanders, made his way to the lagoon. In his arms he carried the Louis Quinze clock. Anxiety was in every face. Remarks were exchanged in an undertone. The gold crescent of the sands was covered with a pale-lipped throng, framed by the brilliant foliage of the woods. The sea was sparkling in the sunshine, but deep in the clear waters of the lagoon could be seen the ghastly form of a monstrous man-eating shark. It seemed to be waiting for the terrible ceremony to begin.

Then, when Pietro had crushed his lips to the face of the clock for the last time, in a silence broken by the sobs of women, he drew a long breath, and running down the sands, he flung the clock far out into the waters of the

lagoon.

It fell in a flashing parabola through the blue air. At the same moment a dense cloud of flying fish, in terror at the proximity of the shark, rose out of the sea. So that it was as if a silver veil hung between those on the beach and the place where the clock had splashed, and for an instant they could see nothing. And then, when this veil had gone, a wonderful sight met the eyes of the silent crowd. Resting upon a shallow car of tortoise-shell and pearl, drawn by nine dolphins harnessed with rose-red coral chains, was a most lovely girl.

A great cry rose from the shore. The dolphins drew their exquisite burden gently to the beach. In another moment Pietro held the Princess Tasiti in his arms.

### LYTTON STRACHEY

## **FROUDE**

James Anthony Froude was one of the salient figures of mid-Victorian England. In that society of prepotent personages he more than held his own. He was not merely the author of the famous History; he was a man of letters who was also a man of the world, an accomplished gentleman, whose rich nature overflowed with abounding energy, a sportsman, a yachtsman, a brilliant and magnificent talker-and something more: one in whose presence it was impossible not to feel a hint of mystery, of strange melancholy, an uncomfortable suggestion of enigmatic power. His most impressive appearance completed the effect: the height, the long, pale face, the massive, vigorous features, the black hair and eyebrows, and the immense eyes, with their glowing darkness, whose colour—so a careful observer noted—was neither brown, nor blue, nor black, but red. What was the explanation of it all? What was the inner cause of this brio and this sadness, this passionate earnestness and this sardonic wit? One wonders, as his after-dinner listeners used to wonder, in the 'sixties, with a little shiver, while the port went round, and the ladies waited in the drawing-room.

Perhaps it is easier for us than for them to make, at any rate, a guess; for we know more of the facts and we have our modern psychology to give us confidence. Perhaps the real explanation was old Mr. Froude, who was a hunting parson of a severely conventional type, with a marked talent for water-colours. Mrs. Froude had died early, leaving the boy to be brought up by this iron-bound

clergyman and some brothers much older than himself. His childhood was wretched, his boyhood was frightful. He was sent, ill and overgrown, to college at Westminster, and there—it was, as the biographers dutifully point out, in the bad old days before the influence of Dr. Arnold had turned the Public Schools into models of industry and civilized behaviour—he suffered, for two years, indescribable torment. He was removed in disgrace, flogged by his father for imaginary delinquencies, and kept at home for two years more in the condition of an outcast. His eldest brother, Hurrell, who was one of the leaders in the new fashion of taking Christianity seriously, and mortified his own flesh by eating fish on Fridays, egged on the parental discipline with pious glee. At last, grown too old for castigation, the lad was allowed to go to Oxford. There, for the first time in his life, he began to enjoy himself, and became engaged to an attractive young lady. But he had run up bills with the Oxford tradesmen, had told his father they were less than they were, the facts had come out, and old Mr. Froude, declaring that his son was little better than a common swindler, denounced him as such to the young lady's father, who thereupon broke off the engagement. It seems surprising that Anthony resisted the temptation of suicide—that he had the strength and the courage to outface his misfortunes, to make a career for himself and become a highly successful man. What is more surprising is that his attitude towards his father never ceased, from first to last, to be one of intense admiration. He might struggle, he might complain, he might react, but he always, with a strange overpowering instinctiveness, adored. Old Mr. Froude had drawn a magic circle round his son, from which escape was impossible; and the

creature whose life had been almost ruined by his father's moral cruelty, who—to all appearances—had thrown off the yoke, and grown into maturity with the powerful, audacious, sceptical spirit of a free man, remained, in fact, in secret servitude—a disciplinarian, a Protestant, even a church-goer, to the very end.

Possibly the charm might have been exorcised by an invocation to science, but Froude remained curiously aloof from the dominating influence of his age; and instead, when his father had vanished, submitted himself to Carlyle. The substitution was symptomatic: the new father expressed in explicit dogma the unconscious teaching of the old. To the present generation Carlyle presents a curious problem—it is so very difficult to believe that real red-hot lava ever flowed from that dry neglected crater; but the present generation never heard Carlyle talk. For many years Froude heard little else: he became an evangelist; but when he produced his gospel, it met, like some others, with a mixed reception. The Victorian public, unable to understand a form of hero-worship which laid bare the faults of the hero, was appalled, and refused to believe what was the simple fact—that Froude's adoration was of so complete a kind that it shrank with horror from the notion of omitting a single wart from the portrait. To us the warts are obvious: our only difficulty is to account for the adoration. However, since it led incidentally to the publication of Mrs. Carlyle's letters as well as her husband's, we can only be thankful.

The main work of Froude's life, the History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada, began to appear in 1856 and was completed in 1870. It is undoubtedly a deeply interesting book, full of thought, of imagination and of excitement, the product of great

industry and great power of writing: whether it ranks among the small first class of histories is less certain. Contemporary critics found much to complain of in it, but their strictures were, on the whole, beside the mark. Among them the most formidable was Professor Freeman, who dissected Froude with the utmost savagery month after month and year after year in the pages of the Saturday Review. Freeman was a man of considerable learning, and of an ill-temper even more considerable; his minute knowledge of the Early English, his passionate devotion to the Anglo-Saxons, and his intimate conviction (supported by that of Dr. Stubbs), that he (with the possible exception of Dr. Stubbs) was the supreme historian, made a strange mixture in his mind, boiling and simmering together over the flames of a temperamental vexation. Unfortunately no particle of this heat ever reached his printed productions, which were remarkable for their soporific qualities and for containing no words but those of Anglo-Saxon descent. The spirit, not only of the school but of the Sunday school, was what animated those innumerable pages, adorning with a parochial earnestness the heavy burden of research. Naturally enough Froude's work, so coloured, so personal, so obviously written by somebody who was acquainted with the world as well as Oxford, acted like a red rag on the Professor. He stormed, he stamped, his fiery and choleric beard shook with indignation. He declared that the book was a mass of inaccuracies and a dastardly attack upon the Church of England. The former accusation was the more important, and the Professor devoted years to the proof of it. Unluckily for him, however, the years only revealed more and more clearly the indisputable value of Froude's work in the domain of pure erudition. He was not a careful transcriber, and he occasionally made a downright blunder; but such blemishes are of small moment compared with the immense addition he made to historical knowledge by his exploration and revelation of the manuscripts at Simancas. Froude was dignified; he kept silence for twenty years, and then replied to his tormentor in an article so crushing as to elicit something almost like an apology. But he was more completely avenged in a very different and quite unexpected manner. Mr. Horace Round, a 'burrower into wormholes' living in Brighton, suddenly emerged from the parchments among which he spent his life deliciously gnawing at the pedigrees of the proudest families of England, and in a series of articles fell upon Freeman with astonishing force. The attack was particularly serious because it was delivered at the strongest point in the Professor's armour -his exactitude, his knowledge of his authorities, his undeviating attention to fact, and it was particularly galling because it was directed against the very crown and culmination of the Professor's history—his account of the Battle of Hastings. With masterly skill Mr. Round showed that, through a variety of errors, the whole nature of the battle had been misunderstood and misrepresented; more than that, he proved that the name of 'Senlac' with which Freeman had christened it, and which he had imposed upon the learned world, was utterly without foundation and had been arrived at by a foolish mistake. Mr. Round was an obscure technician, but he deserves the gratitude of Englishmen for having extirpated that odious word from their vocabulary. The effect of these articles on Freeman was alarming; his blood boiled, but he positively made no reply. For years the attacks continued, and for years the Professor was dumb. Fulminating

rejoinders rushed into his brain, only to be whisked away again—they were not quite fulminating enough. The most devastating article of all was written, was set up in proof, but was not yet published; it contained the exposé of 'Senlac', and rumours of its purport and approaching appearance were already flying about in museums and common-rooms. Freeman was aghast at this last impertinence; but still he nursed his wrath. Like King Lear, he would do such things—what they were yet he knew not—but they should be the terrors of the earth. At last, silent and purple, he gathered his female attendants about him, and left England for an infuriated holiday. There was an ominous pause; and then the fell news reached Brighton. The Professor had gone pop in Spain. Mr. Round, however, was remorseless, and published. It was left for his adversary's pupils and admirers to struggle with him as best they could, but they did so ineffectively; and he remained, like the Normans, in possession of the field.

A true criticism of Froude's History implies a wider view than Freeman's. The theme of the book was the triumph of the Reformation in England—a theme not only intensely dramatic in itself, but one which raised a multitude of problems of profound and perennial interest. Froude could manage the drama (though in his hands it sometimes degenerated into melodrama) well enough: it was his treatment of the philosophical issues that was defective. Carlyle—it seems hardly credible—actually believed that the Revolution was to be explained as a punishment meted out to France for her loose living in the eighteenth century; and Froude's ethical conceptions, though they were not quite so crude, belonged to the same infantile species as his master's. The Protestants

were right and the Catholics were wrong. Henry VIII enabled the Protestants to win, therefore Henry VIII was an admirable person: such was the kind of proposition by which Froude's attitude towards that period of vast and complicated import was determined. His Carlylean theories demanded a hero, and Henry VIII came pat to hand; he refused to see—what is plain to any impartial observer—that the Defender of the Faith combined in a peculiar manner the unpleasant vices of meanness and brutality; no! he made the Reformation he saved England—he was a demi-god. How the execution of Catherine Howard—a young girl who amused herself-helped forward Protestant England, we are not told. Froude's insensitiveness to cruelty becomes, indeed. at times, almost pathological. When King and Parliament between them have a man boiled alive in Smithfield market, he is favourably impressed; it is only when Protestants are tortured that there is talk of martyrdom. The bias, no doubt, gives a spice to the work, but it is a cheap spice—bought, one feels, at the Co-operative Stores. The whiggery of Macaulay may be tiresome, but it has the flavour of an aristocracy about it, of a high intellectual tradition; while Froude's Protestantism isthere is really only one word for it—provincial.

A certain narrowness of thought and feeling: that may be forgiven, if it is expressed in a style of sufficient mastery. Froude was an able, a brilliant writer, copious and vivid, with a picturesque imagination and a fine command of narrative. His grand set-pieces—the execution of Somerset and Mary Queen of Scots, the end of Cranmer, the ruin of the Armada—go off magnificently, and cannot be forgotten; and, apart from these, the extraordinary succession of events assumes, as it flows through

his pages, the thrilling lineaments of a great story, upon whose issue the most blasé reader is forced to hang entranced. Yet the supreme quality of style seems to be lacking. One is uneasily aware of a looseness in the texture, an absence of concentration in the presentment, a failure to fuse the whole material into organic life. Perhaps, after all, it is the intellect and the emotion that are at fault here too; perhaps when one is hoping for genius, it is only talent—only immense talent—that one finds. One thinks of the mysterious wisdom of Thucydides, of the terrific force of Tacitus, of the Gibbonian balance and lucidity and co-ordination—ah! to few, to very few, among historians is it granted to bring the κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί into the world. And yet . . . if only, one feels, this gifted, splendid man could have stepped back a little, could have withdrawn from the provinciality of Protestantism and the crudity of the Carlylean dogma, could have allowed himself, untrammelled, to play upon his subject with his native art and his native wit! Then, surely, he would have celebrated other virtues besides the unpleasant ones; he would have seen some drawbacks to power and patriotism, he would have preferred civilization to fanaticism, and Queen Elizabeth to John Knox. He might even have written immortal English. But alas! these are vain speculations; old Mr. Froude would never have permitted anything of the sort.



## DESMOND MACCARTHY

# ARTHUR BALFOU

Lord Balfour's Chapters of Autobiography was begun two years before his death, when he was within a month or two of his eightieth birthday. Soon afterwards the first symptoms of his last illness appeared and he lost strength. He was forced to rest often, and after his resignation in May 1929 he led an invalid's life. His niece, Mrs. Edgar Dugdale, who edits these few chapters of a book planned on a large scale, says that at first he was unwilling to write his memoirs. He mistrusted his memory in personal matters. 'In fact,' he told her laughing, 'I know far more about the history of my country than I do about my own.' Also he mistrusted his power to describe what he did remember. He had no gift for description. You may search his writings in vain for a sentence, or even an adjective, which stimulates the ocular imagination. But he possessed what in the long run stands the memoirist in better stead, the power of clear, neat, conclusive statement. He became very much interested in writing his memoirs, and what he has written shows no trace of either the languor of illness or the garrulity of age. It has the finish and flowing ease of all his previous books. He was always extremely fastidious about the written word, giving everything he wrote the double polish: that which removes from the surface of style the roughness and inexactness of improvisation, and that which strives to obliterate traces of unnecessary care. In speaking he avoided rhetoric, for he could not learn by heart, but with his pen he could construct periods which in movement,

balance, and emphasis will stand comparison with the best rhetoric in the language. He could conduct on paper a long train of reasoning with elegant eloquence. and in controversy he had at command a deadly ironic urbanity. In fact, it is surprising that the excellence of his prose did not receive in his lifetime more enthusiastic recognition from other men of letters. It is true that it excelled in ways somewhat out of fashion. He always wrote considered literary prose, and, in his case, between emotion and its expression a strict standard of literary manners invariably intervened. Though far from being always detached from his theme, he was detached from his readers, and he allowed them to be conscious of it. He made clear what it was that he thought important, and then emphasized and decorated the statement of it with every device at his command, but he never took his readers into his confidence regarding his own feelings. For instance, The Foundations of Belief and his Gifford Lectures leave no doubt that he thought religion all-important to mankind, and religious faith to be the condition upon which all values depended; but there is nowhere in his writings an indication of what religion meant to him personally, or of how much he himself believed. (Contrast him with Ruskin, in this respect, who held much the same views on the vital importance of religion, and also used eloquence to display the consequences of scepticism.) These opening chapters of autobiography, also, throw no light on his inner life, and in this they are characteristic of him. In society he was an island surrounded by urbanity, an urbanity with some tricky currents in it, and he certainly was not one to invite, in print, the public to land. He seemed, even a casual observer could hardly fail to notice it, to dislike and despise particularly two

qualities in human nature, intrusiveness and cock-sureness. These alienated in him a sympathy which was otherwise at the disposal of many sorts and conditions of men. His irony, when unkind, was usually provoked by exhibitions of one of these characteristics. As a well-known journalist found, who, when bent on astounding the table by declaring that 'Christianity and Journalism had been the two great curses of humanity', saw his effect destroyed by the quick, bland admission, 'Christianity, of course, but why Journalism?' But it is not, however, necessary to use anecdotes to illustrate a trait which pervades that remarkable pamphlet, 'Dr. Clifford on Religious Education.' Though this particular controversy is dead, that pamphlet remains, just below Newman's reply to Kingsley, a model of intellectual castigation. Indeed, the disparity between the disputants is so great, not only in intellectual power but in intellectual integrity, that the contest seems almost unfair. After presenting lucidly, and with apparent astonishment, the inconsistencies of the eminent Nonconformist divine, Mr. Balfour proceeded to examine his style. 'We may easily forgive loose logic and erratic history: strong language about political opponents is too common to excite anything but a passing regret. . . . But,' he continued, 'I have often wondered how a man of Dr. Clifford's high character and position can sink to methods like these, and I am disposed to find the explanation in the fact that he is the unconscious victim of his own rhetoric. Whatever may have been the case originally, he is now the slave, not the master, of his style: and his style is unfortunately one which admits neither of measure nor of accuracy. Distortion and exaggeration are of its very essence. If he has to speak of our pending differences, acute no doubt, but

not unprecedented, he must needs compare them to the great Civil War. If he has to describe a deputation of Nonconformist ministers presenting their case to the leader of the House of Commons, nothing less will serve him as a parallel than Luther's appearance before the Diet of Worms. If he has to indicate that, as sometimes happens in the case of a deputation, the gentlemen composing it firmly believed in the strength of their own case, this cannot be done at a smaller rhetorical cost than by describing them as "earnest men speaking in the austerest tones of invincible conviction ... ". It would be unkind to require moderation or accuracy from anyone to whom such modes of expression have evidently become a second nature. Nor do I wish to judge Dr. Clifford harshly. He . must surely occasionally find his method embarrassing. even to himself?

Someone once said of Renan that he was 'le plus doux des hommes cruels'. This would certainly not describe Lord Balfour; but if we were to turn such a comment round, and modifying it, call him the most merciless (on occasions) of moderate men, we would not, I think, be far out. To many, and also to me, this irreconcilable severity towards certain failings, which shocked his love of the amenities and of intellectual integrity, was, in a man without rancour or resentment, most attractive. It was in the first place a salutary protest against the influence of a faculty which, as things are, has too much power in the world—that of intentionally losing one's head in order to further a cause genuinely believed in. He is once reported to have said: 'It is sad that enthusiasm should have more influence than anything else, for few enthusiasts tell the truth.' He had the philosopher's respect for truth. What made him so fascinating to

watch during his life, and will make him fascinating to posterity, is that he was a rare type of statesman. He was a politician doubled with a philosopher. As his autobiography shows, it was a toss-up whether he would devote himself to a life of thought, or politics. In his account of his Cambridge career he marks as decisive the accidental feature that he happened to be the last undergraduate admitted as a Fellow-Commoner, a position entailing the privilege of dining with the dons at the high table. He thus became the close friend of two young Fellows of Trinity, both destined to be his brothers-in-law and eminent, Henry Sidgwick and John Strutt, afterwards Lord Rayleigh. Both the philosopher and the man of science had a strong influence upon his innate dispositions. It would have proved decisive had not there been another powerful factor in his life: he was the nephew of Lord Salisbury, for whom he felt an admiring devotion; and of whom he said in moving the vote of condolence in the House of Commons, 'never did any man bring to the service of his country an intellect of greater distinction, and never did any man spend himself in that service with more single-minded and wholehearted devotion'. Although Arthur Balfour's rare abilities were recognized by his elders and friends, and never seriously doubted by himself when he compared them with those of others (he was only modest in relation to the difficulty of the questions which interested him most), those abilities had never received the stamp of impartial recognition. His masters at Eton, his examiners at the University had not thought them remarkable. His having nothing 'to show' in proof of philosophical aptitude, though he had taken the Moral Science Tripos at Cambridge, taken in conjunction with an opportunity of at

once entering politics as Parliamentary Secretary to the future leader of the Conservative Party, decided his choice. But the life of thought never lost attraction for him, or importance in his eyes. And there were moments throughout his career when it was apparently with relief that he felt again beneath him the firm ground of abstraction. His speculative interests were, however, keenest at those points where philosophy influences men's beliefs most directly. In his boyhood the conflict between religion and science was at its height. Nearly all his philosophic writings can be included under three heads: those which defended, not so much particular beliefs, as the right to believe; those which applied scepticism to deductions drawn from science contrary to religion, and those which set forth the effects on human culture, in his judgement disastrous, of a mechanistic view of the Universe.

But it is necessary to refine upon the definition of Lord Balfour as a politician doubled with a philosopher: a description which would not distinguish him from such a politician as the late Lord Morley, for example, also a man whom philosophy never ceased to interest. The mingling of philosophy and politics resulted, in Lord Balfour's case, in a different product. A third element intervened: the aristocratic tradition. Part of that tradition seems to be-it springs from possessing a background of security—to play the political game with businesslike impersonal concentration. It does not, of course, preclude devotion to the Country, indeed, that devotion often accompanies it. But it was only Arthur Balfour's manner that suggested that he was a political dilettante—his obvious indifference to dramatic effects and to popular, or indeed individual, applause—his impersonal calm. That manner might suggest that he thought the matter before

the House or the public was not of vital importance, but no one who watched him could fail to see that the word 'academic' really applied more pertinently to such men as Lord Morley, the philosophic publicist, or Lord Bryce, the historian. It did not apply to Lord Balfour in the least. In politics he was uninfluenced by ideas. All his manœuvres, all his energies were directed to an immediately practical end. In politics he threw off the robe of the philosopher, ornamental but impeding tatters of which hung about the shoulders of Lord Morley in the political arena, and put on his ruffles and rapier to fight for his side in the matter at issue. His contemplative outlook in private life, the vistas which opened to his thought, long enough to diminish the importance of present disputes, contrasted with his preference for short views in politics. And it was all the easier for him not to allow his decisions to be complicated by deeper reflections because these, I think, led him to conclude that the future of civilization depended far more upon science and developments in technology than upon politics—certainly domestic politics. The great sweeping course of change will bring about what it will; meanwhile let us preserve for the moment those elements in the present which seem to us undoubtedly desirable, even though we cannot pretend to be entirely disinterested. Some such feeling, or conviction, I surmise, supported his serenity when issues he cared for were lost, and underpinned his Conservatism. It would account too, in a measure, for another contrast between the politician and the philosopher in him. The word 'academic' certainly never applied to his interest in politics or to his career; but it was a charge continually brought, with more justice, against his arguments in debate. His skill in dialectics was wonderful, and he

seemed to relish the exercise of it more than anything else in public life. One of his favourite devices was to brush aside probabilities on which his adversary's case rested as vague, and then expose any logical contradictions involved in his argument. Yet, as a philosopher, he tended to defend an attitude towards experience not very unlike that suggested by Newman's 'illative sense' or Pascal's 'esprit de finesse'; namely, the kind of probability which is 'the guide of life.'

In private life he exercised a fascination which was famous, and made others extremely anxious to win his affection and regard. Some, no doubt, could be certain they had done so and rejoice in the possession of them, but others who would, where another man was concerned, have been confident that they possessed both, in his case felt sometimes uncertain. What he was to them they knew; what they were to him appeared indefinite. He possessed that graceful and endearing attribute politesse du cœur in such perfection that it was hard, for all but a few, to tell where courtesy ended and heart began. His memoirs are those of a man who disliked and distrusted introspection. 'I am more or less happy,' he once said, 'when being praised; not very uncomfortable when being abused, but I have moments of uneasiness when being explained.' He was speaking of himself as a public man, but in the irony of this placidly truthful confession there is something daunting to any one who would attempt it. It is not the confession of one who fears to be unveiled, but the irony of one who knows what clever misconceptions were likely to be proclaimed as discoveries. As in the case of some other men of subtle intellect, his feelings were probably a great deal simpler than people found it easy to believe.

# READERS' REPORTS

Heinrich Heine; a critical examination of the poet and his works, by H. Walter. (Dent. 12s. 6d.) The name of Heine is well known in England, but most of us have only the vaguest knowledge of the poet's life, and little knowledge of his writings, apart from the fact that at moments of festivity the Germans love to begin singing the melancholy, haunting lines of the Lorelei. This book by Professor Walter gives a full account of all Heine's literary work. It is not one of those biographies, like Ariel or The Stricken Deer, in which the personal life of the poet claims so much attention that the reader finds himself forgetting at times that the subject of the biography wrote poetry. Nor does it belong to that modern gallery of biographical portraits in which it is often easier to read the personality of the painter than that of the sitter. The book relates in detail the eventful youth of Heine at Düsseldorf and Hamburg, his relations with the Burschenschaft movement at the Universities of Bonn and Göttingen (which has an added interest in view of the modern nationalist movement in Germany), his life in Berlin, his journeys to England and Italy. It relates his self-imposed exile in Paris, his ceaseless financial worries, his dissipations, his political activities, his bitter quarrels, and finally his long illness (we are reminded of Proust) on his 'mattress-grave', where 'that Christ-like head with its Mephistophelian smile' was to the end the focus-point of European excitement. But all this Professor Walter keeps subordinate to Heine's work as an artist, as an intrepid fighter, and as a critic of inexhaustible vitality and resource. For Heine was not only a poet. His acid polemics are as unforgettable as the music of his lyrics.

The violence of the antagonism which Heine excited might seem incredible were we to forget the circumstances of the age he lived in. Until 1848, Metternich was ruling the Continent from Vienna, but everywhere political passions were in a ferment. The Liberal movement had as yet lost none of its fire and faith, and one of the most interesting features of this Life of Heine is its reflection of the connection which existed between European politics and the Romantic movement.

Heine was at heart a Romantic. Ruins and moonlight, graveyards, nightingales and roses—all the mise en scène of Romanticism is in his poetry. Madame de Staël had declared that art must be cosmopolitan, and Heine was a cosmopolitan. No doubt the Weltschmerz which inspired so many of his earlier poems was something of a conscious attitude, prompted by the circles he moved in. They insisted that a poet should be las de souffrir. But Heine's cosmopolitanism was no pose. He was a Jew. He was a cosmopolitan, therefore, by blood. For this very reason, although a Romantic and a Liberal, he never lost his sense of detachment in regard to either the Romantic movement or Liberalism. And thus, as an 'interpreter of France to Germany' he was able to become the most vigorous critic of the two great enthusiasms of his age. He realized that, from the point of view of politics, 'in France the romantic creation of the Middle Ages was harmless, because, owing to the great Revolution, the Middle Ages were dead beyond recall, whereas in Germany the medieval spirit was still stalking ominously through both politics and religion'. And he realized that in art taste was beginning to weary of romances which were as 'full of costumes', in Disraeli's words, 'as a fancy ball'.

That Heine should have made so many bitter enemies

is not surprising. Nobody could be more intolerant than the Liberals, especially the German exiles in Paris, whose company Heine found nauseating. His innate aristocracy of feeling (evident in his declining admiration of Saint-Simonism as the popularity of it grew) accentuated his own aloofness. Above all, the unparalleled virulence of Heine's attacks allowed no hope of reconciliation. He stopped at nothing. Not content with demolishing an opponent's argument, he would ridicule his opponent's morals, or the shape of his stomach. He made use alike of the wit of the salon and the coarse abuse of the gutter. Extracts from Heine's polemical writings are some of the most entertaining things in Professor Walter's book.

With the publication of a Bibliography (Constable. 25s.), and of two hitherto unpublished works (The Vision. Liber Veritas. Constable. 18s.), Mr. Guy Chapman completes his edition of The Master of Fonthill. Nothing now remains to be done, for even the most fanatical of Beckford's adorers will not grudge the omission of a few unpublished scraps and all-but forgotten printed pieces, and these two volumes, beautifully produced and impeccably edited, are an essential complement to Mr. Chapman's recent editions of Vathek and The Travel Diaries.

As literature, The Vision and Liber Veritas are inconsiderable trifles; as documents, however, they are important to anyone who wishes to understand a little more about a not very pleasant, not very easily defined character. For, as far as we know, these two sketches were Beckford's first and last works, products respectively of a wild, fantastic, vicious youth and an embittered, neglected, pompous old man. Between them runs the wayward course of a life, which was already a legend

before it had ended, a legend of prodigal expenditure, of the rearing of vast castles, built, like everything else in his life, on insecure foundations, of disreputable scandals, of inordinate vanity, expressed beyond the dreams of avarice and exhibitionism. In The Vision one hears the passionate cry of youth: in Liber Veritas the spiteful complaining of one who had outlived his day: bliss was it in that dawn to be alive; but to be old and forgotten, absolute hell. Vathek is foreshadowed in the elaborately embroidered descriptions of the former, though the pen is not yet tipped with the irony which Beckford afterwards acquired and used as a weapon to defend himself from his own dreams. The Vision is only a fragment of a dream of an Arabian night, beautiful and grotesque, but, like any dream, without shape or form, beginning or end, an irregularity of vainglory. Liber Veritas, on the other hand, presents the unpleasant spectacle of a man on the morning after the night before. Living in a world of dreams, which admitted no more of the realities of life but what shone dimly and discreetly through the gules and azure of emblazoned windows, Beckford, his head buried beneath a thin covering of gold-dust, imagined himself the queen of ostriches. As the veil of wealth which concealed him from the outer world slowly perished, he was confronted with the disagreeable truth that he was a nobody, and that the rest of the world had passed him by without taking any notice of him at all. In self-defence he imagined himself the surviving relic of the great generation of eighteenth-century landowners instead of the spoiled child of a man who had made his fortune in Jamaica. Any scrap of paper served his purpose. Seizing his pen, he expressed, without restraining his jealousy, his hatred of an upstart generation of ennobled bankers and grocers,

and into the hasty notes of *Liber Veritas* he emptied the bitterness which had been accumulating since the patent of a Barony had been denied to him.

It is a relief, after the cloying sweetness of The Vision and the grape-like sourness of Liber Veritas, to open the wholesome pages of the Bibliography, which Mr. Chapman has compiled with the invaluable assistance of Mr. Hodgkin. Together, they have made a book which will interest the collector as well as anyone who is interested in the genesis of Beckford's work. The complicated history of the early editions and translations of Vathek is here unravelled for the first time, and one learns from it the kind of fact which illustrates how such an apparently specialized science as bibliography can help the literary historian, viz.: that Vathek was hardly heard of until about thirty years after it was written, because all but a very few of the original copies were destroyed at Beckford's request. We may learn also, surprising as it may seem, that The Interesting Emotions of Arabella Bloomville were in part, if not wholly, the Caliph's own, and that J. A. M. Jenks, the author, or authoress, of Azemia, was also the author of Vathek. Mr. Hodgkin would go even farther than Mr. Chapman goes in his appendix of attributed works, and claim Beckford as the author of four books, which from their titles appear to be gastronomical treatises. This is all very tantalizing and unexpected for the amateur, and of great importance for the collector. Mr. Chapman shows with authority that there are several forgotten books which may be attributed to Beckford with reasonable certainty. In doing this he has opened up a new field for the collector of an author whose works are steadily rising in price and will, it seems, continue to do so. In 1832 Beckford wrote to his bookseller,

Clarke: 'If ever the world discovers the key of certain anonymous publications it will find I have not been idle'. And now that Mr. Chapman has most selflessly given away the key to some of them, there is likely to be some energetic scouring of old cupboards and neglected top shelves. But these anonymous publications are probably as rare, if not rarer, than the authenticated ones, and it would be impossible for anyone to get together so complete a collection as that which Mr. Hodgkin has spent many years in finding. Indeed, so few copies exist of some of the entries in this Bibliography that it is a pity that Mr. Chapman has not condescended to mention more often than he does where one at least may be found. This, howeyer, is a trifling criticism of a bibliography which, for the accuracy of its collations (where I have been able to check them), and the fullness of its descriptions, is a model for its kind. I.H.

### THE OLD STAGERS

This is the month of the Old Stagers. Here are ten novels, and not one of them is a first novel. Two of the writers have ten to their credit, and one has thirteen. So it may be presumed that these ten distinguished persons, unless they are rich enough to make a hobby of writing detective novels, are at least sufficiently acquainted with the ropes of their profession to make it worth their publishers' while to continue them in existence. What conclusions, then, can we draw from this study of the experts?

The first reflection, the one that stares the reader in the face, is the difficulty of concealing the criminal. In five out of the ten novels, I spotted the murderer (or, in the case where there is no murder, solved the problem) as soon as the mystery was clearly stated. Of course, I am a

hardened fan, and may, therefore, be luckier in my guesses than the rest of the public; but I was not, in these five cases, going nap on the person who seemed least likely or who had no apparent reason for being in the story. I simply give it as my view that nobody who was not exceptionably gullible could fail to detect the murderers of Mr. Rhode, Mr. Crofts, Miss Sayers and Mr. Wade, or to solve Miss Hart's puzzle, within their first few chapters. Of the rest, one book really contains no murderer at all; in another he is brought on late and given little prominence; in two more he is pretty reasonably covered up, though he might be suspected. Only in the case of Miss Agnes Miller's Obole of Paradise (Hutchinson. 7s. 6d.) do I feel confident in saying that nobody could possibly guess the criminal. And Miss Miller is the least experienced—though by no means the least capable—of the ten craftsmen. Obviously, much practice does not guarantee much mystery.

But does it matter? This, the second reflection, is a much more profound and interesting question than the first. It will be observed that two, at any rate, of the five who fail to keep their secrets are by common consent among the first rank of detective novelists, and both Mr. Crofts' and Miss Sayers' books are among their authors' better works. Nor do Mr. Wade and Mr. Rhode fall below their usual standards. A detective novel, it would thus appear, is not necessarily bad because its mystery is not unfathomable, and it may even be suggested that the more of a 'novel' it is, the more, that is to say, it tries to give its characters at least the semblance of reality, the less mysterious will the honest author make it. For he will be bound to give some indications of the real murderousness of his murderer—unless he has no murderer at all,

or, like Dr. Thorndyke, builds his murderer's identity slowly and scientifically from a trouser-button or arsenic up the chimney, and only introduces the completed object in the final chapter. But to consider the subject in detail:

Miss Sayers' book, Strong Poison (Gollancz. 7s. 6d.), allows its murderer to be plain from the start. But, more than that, the method of murder is also quite clear, if the long judicial summing-up with which the book opens be carefully read. Only the motive is not plain—until Miss Sayers indicates it. This is rather a heavy handicap to lay on a detective novel at the start; and it must be accounted much to Miss Sayers' credit as a craftsman that her story remains interesting and readable until the end. It is more than readable: it is happy and amusing, and gives the impression that Miss Sayers must have thoroughly enjoyed writing it. The adventures of Lord Peter's valet in the kitchen, and of Miss Climpson as a medium, go with a delightful swing, and, mystery or none, I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. But—there are two buts. One is Miss Sayers' extraordinary idea of the life of the Chelsea intelligentsia, a life which never was on heaven or earth. It is a caricature, admittedly, but a caricature, not of anything which exists in London studios, but of the Latin Quarter as it was imagined by novelists of the 'nineties. And, anyway, 'advanced' parties don't play ultramodern music to one another: they play Bach. The other 'but' concerns the woeful fit of match-making that has overtaken Miss Sayers. Three couples she pairs off in this book, and, alas! one of them contains Lord Peter Wimsey himself, who is firmly and quite without reason made to fall in love with an entirely characterless Innocent Person. This attempt to drag Lord Peter from a wellearned place among detectives into the dull ranks of

would-be living creatures is deplorable; but the book is good.

Mr. Crofts, in Sir John Magill's Last Journey (Collins. Crime Club. 7s. 6d.), does no match-making. He himself, it is recorded, says that this is his best book. I do not agree with him, though I think it is a good book. I do not mind that when the criminal first appeared, complete with impregnable alibi (Crofts' Patent Line No. 1), I recognized him at once, but I was a little sorry that it was clear so early that Sir John did not die on the train; and, of course, when a motor boat occurs, with an elaborately planned-out journey, the hardened reader knows that Mr. Crofts is going to solve the mystery by means of elaborate calculations and patient journeys all around the route of that motor boat. What I should have liked, since the plot is rather plain, would be a little more incident. We do not look for character from Mr. Crofts: we look for pattern, and we have got it; but we seem to need a little more excitement and change of interest to divert our minds from the solution. In this respect The Cask is still much better than the present book. The writing, also, is a little tired: the grim words, 'French swore', occur too often-and we are not even told what French said.

The Dying Alderman (Constable. 7s. 6d.) shows Mr. Wade to be strong in provincial local colour. I believe in all the members of his Town Council, particularly the cheerful Alderman with the twelve children, who is surely a portrait of Mr. Ben Turner, and I enjoyed reading about them. As far as writing and character-drawing are concerned, this is the best book that Mr. Wade has done. But readers must not expect to be deeply mystified. When the murderer is given a quiet five minutes alone with the

murderee, and when all the other characters in the book proclaim at every suitable moment, 'Whoever is the murderer, this noble creature is not', there is only one possible conclusion. Nor did Mr. Wade's red herrings distract me, though I admit that he succeeds nicely in distributing the responsibility for his crime. It is a pleasantly entertaining work, which has Mr. Fletcher's merits without Mr. Fletcher's casual ways with his readers.

In Pinehurst (Bles. 7s. 6d.), Mr. John Rhode imagined a very villainous villain—so villainous, in fact, that it really seems unkind of him to kill the murderer, in spite of the fact that the said murderer made great efforts—useless, alas! in this case—to plant suspicion of others in the mind of the reader. This book is an average Rhode: it is quite well constructed, but rather lacking in interest. Miss I. R. G. Hart, author of Facets (Benn. 7s. 6d.), can write, as she has proved in more than one previous work, and she can also draw character. Facets is not a murder story, and the explanation of the mystery, as I said, was clear to me long before Miss Hart condescended to disclose it; but I enjoyed the book and can recommend it. Miss Hart is not a first-rate mystery-monger, but she can write a story with a plot. And that is rather a valuable ability.

Of the other five novels one at least is by a first-class writer. Miss Miller's book is charming—there is no other word—although the crime is quite unfathomable, and might almost have been omitted without doing material damage to her story. But her sense of character and her sense of humour are both admirable, as, indeed, was proved in *The Colfax Book-Plate*; and she has found an excellent and unhackneyed setting in the student pension of a French provincial town. Her students are really lifelike, so is the French professor-cicerone who was so stern

with the unfortunate members of his sightseeing party, so are the other inhabitants of the boarding house, so is the French railway coach which was blown several miles away from its destination. But her plot is literally astonishing, and her rough-house scene impossible to follow. Miss Miller's talent—with regret I say it—is thrown away on detective novels: she should be writing 'straight' stuff.

Mrs. Christie, in *The Murder at the Vicarage* (Collins. Crime Club. 7s. 6d.), stole her clerical hero from Canon Hannay, but her style is her own. Her book is light and slight; it contains some very pleasing old cats, and if it is fairly easy to guess the villain, that is no great matter.

Mr. Marcus Magill's new novel, I Like a Good Murder (Knopf. 7s. 6d.), is not so good as his last. It contains no scene which compares in exquisite idiocy with that of the Emu in the Drawing-room. Nevertheless, it is lightly and pleasantly written, and can safely be recommended for a train journey. Mr. Magill also, unlike Miss Sayers, knows his Chelsea, and can give it just the right touch.

There remain two novels, of which one is dullish and the other very dull. Mr. Milward Kennedy, at the opening of Death in a Deck-Chair (Gollancz. 7s. 6d.), announces that he is going to describe the detection of a crime as it might really have taken place, without any brilliant feats of induction, but with the patient co-operation of Scotland Yard and the local police force. And so he does, but it cannot be said that this painstaking realism is very exciting. The main impression one gets is of a great number of indistinguishable policemen spoiling the broth, and worrying, all of them, whether the other fellow has not discovered something extra which he should not have been allowed to discover. Mr. Kennedy is not, none the less, at all a bad writer: his plot is well constructed and

his incidentals well observed; he has only forgotten that, in a detective novel, too much realism can easily be a vice. The Shop Window Murder, by Vernon Loder (Collins. 7s. 6d.), is the only really dull book in this bunch. It contains a complicated plot and a fairly good reforming drunkard; but, for the rest, the characters are sticks and the style heavy. It is a difficult book to read.

Shatter the Dream, by Norah James. (Constable. 7s. 6d. net.) The hero, Robin Downs, is a young bank clerk, rather priggish, who takes himself very seriously. He falls for a selfish, cold-blooded, attractive married woman of the upper middle class and becomes completely infatuated. She encourages him up to a point and lets him play with the idea that he will become her lover. He is suffering from a mortal disease, and learns that he must soon die. Brenda (the cold siren), about to bear a child to her husband, wants to break with Robin. And so she tells him. He has a stroke and that is the end of him. The story is told in the stream-of-consciousness method. The style is simple, downright, with the flat accuracy of a brightly-lit photograph. The method of introducing the characters' thoughts is irritating. Miss James says 'He thought:' and begins a new paragraph. The actual matter of the thinking is often accurately inconsequent, but there is too much irrelevant realistic detail. The reader's emotions are not appealed to. The people are, as it were, twodimensional; this 'flatness' is no doubt intentional. The portrait of Brenda is brilliant: there are no comments. Her relations with her husband are depicted with unobtrusive subtlety. The trouble is that the hero is an uninteresting person who is not even particularly interesting to himself. So although he too seems real, what

happens to him does not seem of importance. One finishes the book recognizing the author's talent and competence, but wishing she had written it about someone else.

Grand Hotel, by Vicki Baum. (Geoffrey Bles. 7s. 6d. net.) The Grand Hotel, Berlin, is the type of all cosmopolitan Ritzcarltonery. This book takes a few characters staying there, mixes them up for a few days and then sorts them out again, one dead, one as he was at the beginning, and the others changed. There is Gaigern, an adventurer in the classic manner—young, dashing, brave and likeable; Preysing, a provincial big-business man who goes to pieces, largely on account of Flammchen, the lovely, pathetic, insecure Flammchen-typist and model, who gives herself gaily to her lovers, honestly and unshrinkingly to those who pay, sophisticated yet ingenuous, kind, and warmly alive; there is Grusinskaya, a prima ballerina, growing old and realizing that inevitably and soon she will be outmoded, that she must abandon her dancing, which is the whole of her life; Otternschlag wanders about with half his face blown to pieces from the war, alone and lost, infinitely bored until he is no longer even cynical, and finding solace and escape only in drugs; and finally, the brave and pathetic little Kringlein, a clerk of Preysing's, who learns that he has not long to live, and flees from his dreary life with all his savings, to be a rich man for a month, hoping that he may taste all that he has missed in living now, before he dies.

Gaigern is after Grusinskaya's pearls, but encountering her engaged in suicide, they become strangely enamoured. Preysing, for the first time in his life of honestly bungling business mediocrity, starts to put through a shady deal, and having abandoned his standards permits himself to lust after Flammchen; he engages her as his secretary. The evening of their first night together he is interrupted by Gaigern stealing his pocket-book; picking up a bronze interior decorative piece, he kills him; Flammchen flees and finds another lover that night in the little clerk, who by now is happy, and has learned to enjoy life. The next morning is the last morning of the book. Gaigern's corpse goes out of an obscure back entrance, while Grusinskaya is telephoning him from Vienna; the no-more respectable Preysing leaves by the front door accompanied by detectives. Flammchen and her lover depart for the South of France, all cheerful. Otternschlag sleeps in the vague freedom of morphine stupor.

This book is enormously readable: it is swift, alive, and contemporary, in its period, not commenting upon it. Its characters are types, not shown with any depth of psychological complexity, but sketched vividly and sympathetically. The whole atmosphere is curiously film-like: the construction is like montage. Where it fails is in its intention of making the hotel a living entity: most of the time it is incidental background, though obviously it is the author's intention to make it an integral and vital part of the story. Grand Hotel has been rather over-rapturously received: it would be ridiculous to hail Fräulein Baum as a great authoress, but 'she knows her stuff'.

The Castle, by Kafka. (Martin Secker. 7s. 6d. net.) Coming to the point where The Castle leaves off (for it is unfinished, a posthumous work) is like waking from a dream: one retains a vague, swimmy, half-drunken, half-drugged feeling. The mind's ear has been lulled into unwondering acquiescence with a continual procession of involuted and

endless sentences, of conversations where people speak for hours in vague surroundings, in unparagraphed pages. What is it all about? The translator's eulogistic preface, Max Brod's note at the end, say that *The Castle* is a magnificent allegory, a profound and modern *Pilgrim's Progress*. But the figures in an allegory should be universal, representative; while these people are extraordinary, impalpable and reasonless creatures moving in a kind of dream. The castle stands on a hill overlooking the village. Everyone speaks of it reverently; in it are thousands of extraordinary officials ministering in unknowable tasks. There is a sinister background of godlike, enormous, incompetent routine and activity. Decisions, protocols, messages fly about. No one knows what is at the back of it

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The Thundering Abbot, by Henri Brémond, translated by F. J. Sheed. (Sheed & Ward. 7s. 6d.) This book, as the translator mildly remarks, might be described as a Study in Antipathy. The Abbé Brémond hates the Abbé Rancé, and cannot conceal his enjoyment in cutting him up. We are getting used to that sort of book in England, but in England they are not usually written by men of Abbé Brémond's learning. Those who enjoy the scientific dissection of a disagreeable character by an operator who is master of his science and makes every cut with the gesture of an artist will read this biography with enjoyment. There is an added piquancy in the fact that it is one Catholic dealing with another, for Rancé was one of the athletes of the Faith. An accomplished, worldly, hunting priest, of high birth and charming manners, Rancé was converted by an experience over which some mystery hangs (his lady died, there was some clumsiness with the coffin, a horrible glimpse of a severed head), and became the reformer of La Trappe. But, to put it with a crudeness which his biographer never allows himself, he remained a thoroughly bad man. The austerities which he inflicted on himself and the loyal Trappists, and which won the reverent

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admiration of all France, were so many exercises in a refined sadism sparing neither soul nor body. In his treatment of sick brethren he showed particular ingenuity. Like everyone else, they had to get up at half past three, but though they were indulged with a straw chair by cay they were expressly forbidden to sit back in it, and they had to walk to the Chapel to receive the last Sacraments. Yet La Trappe was always full, and the heroism of these patient seekers after God is the golden background against which the Abbé Brémond draws the black portrait of this tyrant. Twice he met his match: he attacked the Benedictines for their devotion to secular learning, and, in fact, some young Benedictines had run away to La Trappe rather than face the programme of studies which Saint-Maur expected of its inmates. The gentle Mabillon rose in defence of his order, and reduced Rancé not only to tears but to something like an apology. And the last scene shows us the old man, victorious everywhere but in his own parlour, helpless in the hands of a smug intriguing layman who had the ear of Saint Simon. If ever the canonization of Armand de Rancé is proposed, the Advocatus Diaboli will find his brief prepared for him in this book.